This Issue: The History of The Avengers

No. 4
$1.50
64 Pages

FantaCo's CHRONICLES Series

Articles · Interviews · Complete Checklist · Illustrations · Satire · History

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GREAT MOMENTS IN AVENGERS' HISTORY: May 12, 1964

Pickpocket "Stinky" Goldfarb discovers that he has picked the wrong pocket. *TOUGH BREAK "STINKY"!*

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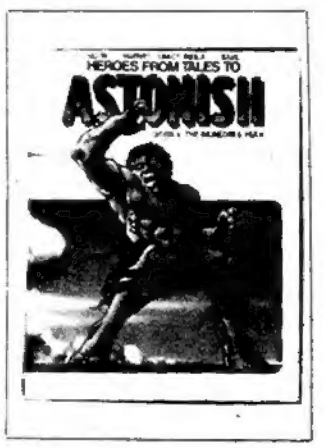

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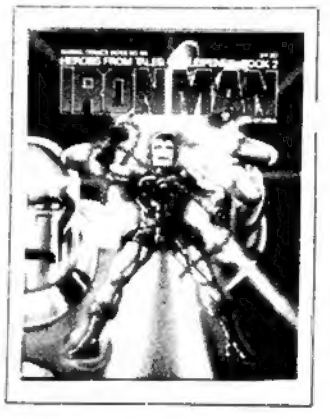

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Gentleman's Gentleman

by John F. Carkner Sr.

Gentleman's gentlemen, or butlers, if you prefer, have been a part of literature for far longer than I would care to go into. They have been everything from the dastardly perpetrators in countless bad murder mysteries to the real head of the household. Witness Joseph Losey's movie "The Servant" for this chilling example of role reversal.

But a good butler will work at keeping in the background. Going by this definition, the Avengers' butler, Edwin Jarvis, is indeed good at his job. And this job must be the most difficult one in butlering history. For his charges have included gods, assorted mutants, an android (hard to cook for, I imagine) and other strange people. This doesn't even take into account the many visitors that descend upon the Avengers Mansion, both friendly and not.

But Jarvis almost always manages to keep his head and his dignity intact. He goes about his duties with quiet competence and pride. These duties include general cleaning and household maintenace, cooking, and perhaps most importantly, as a buffer between the Avengers and the outside world. This last function seems to apply especially to the news media. It was Jarvis whom, in *Avengers* #152, rather forcefully informed a certain television newsman named Reuther that his presence was no longer required.

My own first contact with Jarvis came in *Avengers* #16. This was the first of the "New Lineup" issues. I didn't see him here in his best light, however. He had been attacked and tied up by the invading bowman Hawkeye. But fortunately, the archer wasn't attacking the Avengers, but instead wanted to join them. And to prove his skill with a bow, he untied and degagged the butler with three simultaneously fired arrows. The things a good manservant must put up with! On top of that, the poor man didn't get a chance to say one word in the entire book!

While his name wasn't given, it was obviously Jarvis. This may have been his first Avengers appearance but I have no way of knowing. It's in my copy of *Avenger* #48 that I first find our man with his name given. He'd just received a mayday signal from the captured Quicksilver. But at that time he wasn't sufficiently familiar with Tony Stark's communication system to recognize it.

In *Avengers* #54 he played his most important and tragic role. It all started with his mother needing expensive medical treatments (we're never told what her illness is, only that he's having trouble coming up with the money for its treatment). In his interview in *Foom Magazine* #7, he states that he had tried several banks but he was turned down as being a high risk. He was, after all, a butler for a super-hero team. Not the safest profession you could pick.

Jarvis then recieved a message from a (supposedly) old friend, saying that he could help Jarvis with his problem. All he wanted was the plans to the Avengers security system. Jarvis did so and found himself involved with Ultron-5 and the New Masters of Evil.

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To our hero's credit, he did plan on warning the Avengers after taking the money and running. But, of course, Ultron-5, or the Crimson Cowl as he was calling himself then, had no intention of keeping his word. Dyed in the wool villains don't do that sort of thing. Not only did he gas Jarvis into unconsciousness, he also hypnotized him into taking his place as the Crimson Cowl. A revolting development if ever there was one.

Ultron captures the Avengers and imprisons them in an H-Bomb, except the Black Knight who had been posing as one of the Masters of Evil.

In Issue #55 Ultron un-hypnotizes Jarvis for the purpose of gloating and torturing him with the knowledge that he will be responsible for the Avengers' deaths. When the butler makes a run for it, the Mysterious Melter drops some debris on him, leaving him for dead.

But fortune smiles on our hero and he survives. After he regains consciousness he manages to drag himself to the Avengers' Mansion, where he is confronted by the Black Knight, who convinces Jarvis that he's not a villain. Then Jarvis gives him the whole story, and the Knight rides off to the rescue.

After said operation is successfully concluded, our Medieval friend explains to the Avengers Jarvis' seeming treachery. With this knowledge they forgave him and welcomed him back into their employ. He has been there ever since.

That, as far as I can determine, is the largest part that Jarvis has played in an Avengers' adventure. He does, however, get a story all to himself. This happens in the back-up story of Issue #201, a story called, "Bully," which begins with the banner headline: "Stan Lee Presents: The Impeccable Jarvis."

On his semi-monthly visit to his mother, he discovers that her neighborhood is being terrorized by a young punk, who has the apt, if unimaginative, name of Bruiser.

Jarvis catches up with this example of arrested mental development just as Bruiser is redecorating a local mom and pop grocery store with his fists. Our man asks Bruiser for remuneration to cover a dozen eggs; the punk, it seems, had pushed Jarvis' mother down and in the process broken the eggs. The butler receives a melon in the face for his trouble.

At least six people stood around while this was going on and Jarvis wonders aloud as to the reason they don't stop him. The reason, of course, is fear: Bruiser is one big, mean boy. Then someone suggests that Jarvis call the Avengers. But Jarvis tells them that it's up to them to take care of small problems like Bruiser. The butler announces that he's going to put the young malcontent in his place and asks for volunteers. No one steps forward.

In the fight that follows, Bruiser gets in the first punch. But that is the only time he manages to tag his older, smaller opponent. Using boxing and fighting techniques taught to him by Captain America, Jarvis is ahead on points until the punk pulls out a knife. That's too much for the locals and they start pelting Bruiser with produce. The last we see of him is dashing down the street, spattered and cowed. Jarvis may not be super, but he is hero.

For the background of our gentleman's gentleman, I turn to the interview that he gave in *Foom Magazine* #'s 6 and 7. In it, we learn that his parents emigrated from Walsall, England in the early 1920's and settled in the Bronx where he was born.

During World War II he headed for England where he joined the R.A.F., and was their boxing champion for three years running. He was in the mother country for ten years before returning to the states.

During the 50's he worked for an elderly couple until they passed away. He was then referred to Tony Stark, who had just built the townhouse that would later become the Avengers Mansion; that was in 1960.

In 1963, Jarvis stopped being an ordinary butler, when the Avengers came, the rest of his small staff left. But Jarvis himself would tough it out alone. The first to arrive was Iron Man, whom he'd already met. Thor impressed him greatly, but the next to arrive caused a different reaction. When the Hulk bounded through the door, Jarvis fainted! When he came to, he saw a little pixie with an ammonia capsule flittering around his head. The Wasp and the Ant-Man had arrived while he was out.

During that first meeting all the by-laws were worked out and the next morning he delivered the prepared news release to the newspapers. His long association with the Avengers had begun.

In the years that followed, members came and went. Supervillain after supervillain were met, fought, and defeated. And Jarvis was always there to offer hot food and a sympathetic ear. Captain America was the first live-in hero. After being frozen in an iceberg for twenty years, he really didn't have much of a choice. After the big line-up shake up in Issue #16, Jarvis suddenly had four live-in superheros. It must have been difficult to adjust to all these changes down through the years. But he's taken it all in without complaint, because a good butler never complains.

Edwin Jarvis has been with the Avengers for almost twenty years now. And he's gone through more than any butler has ever had to. But there he is, in my latest issue (#219), shoveling snow off the sidewalk with the help of the Mighty Thor. He then asks the Norse God if he would care to join him in watching the Knicks game on t.v. and drinking hot cocoa. But then, that's Jarvis for you: a gentleman, a hero, and a good man.

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Avengers Assemble

by Lou Mougin

The boy that I was loved comics, and the comic I loved most was *The Avengers.*

Years later, when I became a man and turned back to childhood pleasures, the book that brought me back was *The Avengers.* Thank you Cap, Wanda, Shellhead, Vision and all the rest. . .

And this is how it all began. If you believe the cover date, the month was September of 1963. Iron Man was still in large, cumbersome armor which made him look like a second cousin to Gort, the robot from *The Day The Earth Stood Still.* The Hulk had three toes on each foot, like the Thing, wore purple trunks instead of kneeless, tattered pants, had the approximate intelligence of Bruce Banner but the demeanor of Machine Gun Kelly, and had been pardoned in the last issue of his own magazine for having beaten the Metal Master.* Henry Pym was the original Ant-Man and Janet Van Dyne wore a pointy helmet as The Wasp, his partner. And Thor? Well, Thor had just begun using "thees" and "thous," he wouldn't call his hammer "Mjolnir" for about four more years, and his adventures were still short enough to let Don Blake make his rounds without a hitch. Otherwise he was pretty much the same as today. And he'd just finished putting the wraps on Loki, who, as per usual, got exiled by Big Daddy Odin on the Isle of Silence. Loki was steaming: "Though my *body* be imprisoned, *none* can stop my magic *powers* from roaming the universe. . .in search of *revenge!*"

Loki projects his thoughts, in the form of eyes, over the earth. He finds a convenient foil in the Hulk, dupes him into wrecking a train trestle, and causes him to become an outlaw once more. Rick Jones of the Teen Brigade radios a plea for help to the Fantastic Four on a ham radio set. Loki, not wishing the FF to get involved, reroutes it to a frequency that Don Blake is listening to, and incites the physician, who never once questions why he is receiving a ham radio message over a commercial AM band, to stamp his magic cane and become the mighty Thor!

But, unbeknownst to the god of evil, *other* ears have been listening to the same message! Ears belonging to Tony Stark, who, donning his armor, mutters, "I've always wondered whether the Hulk really existed, and whether Iron Man's strength was a match for him!" And to Henry Pym and Janet Van Dyne, who leap astride two pair of flying ants as Ant-Man and the Wasp! The whole gang convenes at the Teen Brigade's southwestern HQ. Thor, lured outside by an image of the Hulk, soon divines the hand of Loki in the mess and transports himself to Asgard for a showdown. In the meantime, Iron Man, Ant-Man and the Wasp track down the Hulk, dressed in a clown suit and Emmett Kelly makeup, doing strongman tricks in a traveling circus as "Mechano the Robot." The threesome engage the green goliath in a running battle that ranges all the way to a Detroit auto factory. Just as the Hulk and Iron Man are about to get down to cases, Thor drops from the skies, Loki in tow. After the thunderer explains the truth, Loki tries his last trick, becoming radioactive. But the good guys have a hole card themselves: Loki just happens to be standing over a trapdoor, which just happes to lead to a dump chute emptying into a lead-lined tank. And in those days, not even a god from Asgard could escape from a lead-lined tank!

"Wait!" pipes up Ant-Man. "Before we separate, the Wasp and I have something to say. Each of us has a different power. If we combined forces, we could be almost unbeatable!"

"Work as a team?" Iron Man muses. "Why not? *I'm* for it!"

"There is much *good* we might do!" says Thor.

Even the Hulk agrees to the combo: "So, whether you like it or not, *I'm* joinin' the. . .the. . .*hey!* What are you *callin'* yourselves?"

"That's right! We need a name!"

"It should be something colorful and dramatic, like. . .the *Avengers,* or. . !" the Wasp suggests.

"Or nothing!" shouts Ant-Man. "That's *it! The Avengers!"*

And, with that, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby had another instant hit on their hands. *Avengers* #1 debuted the same month as *X-Men* #1, as a copy on the old Justice Society/Justice League format, to be sure. But why not? Featuring successful solo heroes banded together in a team is one sure way of selling a new title. And it gave them a revival vehicle for the Hulk. The only solo Marvel hero left out of the team was Spider-Man, and even *he'd* get a crack at it, in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #3, before turning it down.

But, if The Avengers were partly a JLA derivate, they surpassed their competitor in art quality and characterization. Nobody ever stood still in this team; they ended up with more members than anybody this side of the Legion of Super-Heroes! In issue #2, Ant-Man had become Giant-Man, and the team faced a shape-shifting alien fiend called the Space Phantom, who was soundly trounced but at least succeeded in getting the other Avengers so aggravated at the Hulk that the latter quit the team and leaped off into the sunset. That led to a months-long quest by Thor, Giant-Man, the Wasp and Iron Man (in his new uniform by #3) to find their former ally and bring him back to the fold. But Sub-Mariner had other plans, and partnered himself with the Hulk in a monumental battle against our heroes in Gibraltar. (As a sidebar, *Journey Into Mystery* #112 gave the untold tale of Thor's first solo battle against the Hulk in that fracas. Since then, they've duked it out on three other occasions and all authors have steadfastly refused to acknowledge one as stronger than the other.)

Finally, in *Avengers* #4, a replacement for the Hulk was found. The splash panel told the tale: a red-white-and-blue crusader crossed the floor of a chamber to stand beside Giant-Man, the Wasp, Iron Man and Thor, standing at attention. Thor announced, "Step forward, Captain America! Your rightful place is *here. . .*among *The Avengers!"*

Probably, "Captain America Joins the Avengers" is the single most important issue in the book's 200-plus run. The story has been told and re-told and re-re-told so often that we need but briefly touch on it: Sub-Mariner finds a figure encased in ice being worshipped by a band of Eskimos, throws it into the sea in a fit of pique, and inadvertently causes the ice to melt. The Avengers, returning from their battle last issue, see the figure fully-thawed, fish him out of the drink, and discover beneath the tattered rags of a U.S. Army uniform, "some sort of colorful *costume!"* The Wasp, suddenly recognizing the uniform, speaks the next classic line:

"Wait! Don't you *recognize* it? It's the famous red, white and blue garb of—*Captain America!"*

That it was! Following a *Strange Tales* trial balloon in which the Human Torch had fought the Acrobat, who masqueraded as Captain America, Stan and Jack had enthusiastically revived the Timely hero they loved the most. As it turned out, a Nazi operative and mad scientist called Dr. Zemo had lured both Cap and Bucky into a death trap in 1945. (The interim Caps from 1946 to 1954 were explained away as substitutes many years later.) Bucky had been blown to pieces by a bomb on a plane, but Cap had dropped to safety into the chilly Atlantic waters and became frozen into suspended animation for almost twenty years. The rest of the story detailed Cap's decision to return to action in the world of the 1960's: Sub-Mariner came back for a rematch, and, when he menaced Rick Jones—who looked so much like Bucky that Cap thought he was his twin—the shield-slinger entered the fray, rescuing the youth from Namor just as a spacecraft's takeoff forced both sides to cancel the battle. (What spacecraft? See, there was this guy who looked like an asparagus who had been around for about 3,000 years and had a ray that changed people to stone, and. . .ahhh, forget it.) At the end, Cap placed his hand atop those of the other four heroes, in a reprise of a similar scene in *Fantastic Four #1,* and Thor pronounced: "We welcome you, Captain America, to the ranks of—*The Avengers!"*

There wasn't a dry eye left anywhere in the house.

But back to business. During the same month The Avengers met with the Fantastic Four for the first time in a colossal gang war against the Hulk, who was *awfully* mad at Captain America for appropriating Rick Jones. When the dust had cleared, we had experienced the first superhero-team cross-over in the Marvel Age (FF #25 and #26). Back in their own book, Cap, Iron Man, Giant-Man, the Wasp and Thor fell to cleaning up their wrecked headquarters and then took off to battle the Lava Men and have their last (for a time, anyway) encounter with the Hulk, in *Avengers* #5. Then, in the next issue, the Avengers encountered their first evil counterparts as Doctor Zemo (he wouldn't be known as "Baron" until 1968), alive and well, got the news of Cap's return in his South American jungle lair. Furiously stamping the newspaper with Cap's photo on it into the ground, Zemo recalled how, in the Second World War, Captain America had smashed a vat of his unbreakable Adhesive X over his head, pasting his hood-mask on forever. Vengefully, Zemo organized the Melter, the Radioactive Man and the villainous Black Knight (not to be confused with the heroic versions that came before and after) into the Masters of Evil, worthy competitors to the Frightful Four and the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. The heroes captured everybody but Zemo, who was back in

*It was shown, in *The Rampaging Hulk* #8 and #9, that the five heroes who were to make up the Avengers actually got together some months beforehand to save the Earth from an invasion fleet of evil Krylorians. However, this series—supposedly a "continuity implant" between *Hulk* #6 and *Avengers* #1—was so riddled with inconsistencies that a recent issue of *Incredible Hulk* declared the whole thing a fantasy. Good for them.

the next issue with Thor's old foes, The Executioner and The Enchantress, for a return battle. Naturally, the conflict turned into a blood feud for Captain America and Zemo which would not end for many issues yet.

Avengers #8 introduced their longest-running enemy, the engaging "Kang, the Conqueror"! Kang was formerly Pharaoh Rama-Tut, who had come from the future into the past of ancient Egypt and battled a time-lost Fantastic Four. After accidentally landing in 4000 A.D. thanks to those lovable "electro-static disturbances in the timestream," Kang organized an army to make himself master of the desolate earth of that era. Then, bored, he decided to go back in time and sack the 20th century. Did the Avengers stop him? You betchum, Red Ryder, but he'd be back for many an issue to come.

The ninth issue, one of the best-remembered, introduced Wonder Man and was a real tear-jerker. Basically, Zemo transformed Simon Williams into a super-villain, had him infiltrate the Avengers and thus lured them into a doom-trap. Fortunately, in Wonder Man, the good impulse was stronger than the evil and he refused to see the five heroes killed. Wonder Man turned the tide, but not before Zemo blasted him. He seemed to expire in Iron Man's arms, but the whole story hadn't been told. . . This issue also marked the beginning of Don Heck's tenure as penciller of the series, and he'd do fine work on this title for many issues to come.

"The Avengers Break Up" (#10) introduced the mysterious "lord of limbo," Immortus, who joined with the Masters of Evil to try another futile attempt at crushing the Avengers. *Avengers* #11 brought Kang back in a pretty limp story that saw him trying to trap Cap, Giant-Man, the Wasp and Thor (Iron Man was busy in his own series at the time) with a Spider-Man robot, of all things. (The real Spidey showed up in time to save the day. And even after 18 intervening years, they still haven't thanked him for it.) The next three issues passed at a rapid clip: after meeting the X-Men in issue #9 of the latter's own book, the good guys fought the Mole Man and Red Ghost (#12), took on Count Nefaria (#13) and then went on a race against time to rescue the one surgeon in the world who could save a dying Wasp from the clutches of an alien race (#14). On page 16, Thor shouted out their battle cry for the very first time: "AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!"

Finally, in a memorable two-parter, the curtain went down on the Avengers' first era. "Now, By My Hand, Shall Die a Villain" (#15) brought back all the various Masters of Evil (except the Radioactive Man) for a colossal gang war, and Captain America squared off with Zemo for the last time in South America. This time, the arch-villain perished under a rockslide, and that was that. Zemo might turn up in the future, but only in flashbacks, or as a disguise for one of his minions, or through time-travel. As far as Stan Lee was concerned, that closed the book on the Avengers' first great nemesis. . .

Jack Kirby and Dick Ayers stepped in for Don Heck in the next episode, which, being titled, "The Old Order Changeth!", set the pace for many changeover issues to come. After Iron Man and company put the wraps on the Masters of Evil, Thor left for the Trial of the Gods in his own book and the Wasp proposed that the rest of the team take a breather: "I-I'd like to lead a normal life for a while—just like anybody else!"

Lo and behold! Who should appear on the premises but *Hawkeye, the Marksman!*

Capsule biography time here: Hawkeye, up to this point a foe of Iron Man's, debuted in *Tales of Suspense* #57. His abilities and weapons—a bow and many specially-powered arrows—were obviously derivative of Green Arrow, but that's where the similarity ended. In those days Green Arrow was a serious, tight-lipped member of the Justice League of America who caught conventional criminals and played Bruce Wayne-millionaire on the side. Hawkeye was a cocksure carny performer whose act was upstaged by Iron Man one night. Vowing to beat the Golden Avenger at his own game, the archer donned a costume, nailed a thug, was mistaken by the cops for a crook, and fell in with the Black Widow, at that time still a spy for the Russians in the Cold War. She seduced him into battling Iron Man three times, until her fellow spies gave her a brutal payoff one night and Hawkeye saw the light. Vowing to make amends, the masked marksman applied for membership at the Avengers' headquarters (formerly Tony Stark's townhouse) and was accepted, with none of that silly business about being wanted for treason against the U.S. government even being considered.

After the word was spread that the Assemblers were taking on applicants, two other candidates showed up: Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, ex-members of Magneto's Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Endowed with super-speed and a hex power, respectively, both had been blackmailed into joing Magneto's band until the arch-baddie was shanghaied to the stars by the mighty Stranger. They were accepted with as little hassle as had Hawkeye. Captain America returned home just in time to find out he had been appointed leader over three misfits who lacked the world-beating power of Thor, Iron Man and Giant-Man. Iron Man, realizing this, bade them to find the Hulk and convince him to rejoin the team. Fat chance. But, at any rate, the second team of Avengers was a going concern. Stan Lee explained that he had done it to avoid conflicting with the various members' solo adventures; besides, Thor was about to go on a year-long quest, Giant-Man was about to lose his strip, and Cap's own feature in *Tales of Suspense* was soon devoted to World War II adventures.

The new Avengers were probably the direst assemblage of them all. Collectively, they had so little power that it was all they could do to break even in bouts with Power Man, Kang, Doctor Doom and Attuma. Mostly, they were kept busy just trying to keep from being picked off like flies! Still, it heightened the suspense a bit—the original Avengers were just a tad *too* powerful—and the in-group personality conflicts were great fun. Hawkeye was the most interesting of the bunch. He resented Cap's leadership, wanted the post for himself, and jibed at everybody in the group so often that barroom brawls were *de rigueur*. Quicksilver was, approximately, a cipher; friend to Captain America, he had as much personality as a dishrag, except when getting fed up with Hawkeye and beating him in speed duels. Wanda, the Scarlet Witch, stood beside Cap with a big-brotherly crush, and Cap had his hands full just keeping the bunch alive. He threatened to chuck it about every other issue, and did so once, only to come back running when Kang laid a cosmic beartrap for the other three. During this time The Swordsman debuted. He was the ex-mentor of Hawkeye, had toured the same carnival, and was now an arch-criminal with a deadly steel blade and dagger. The Mandarin used him in Wonder Man fashion to infiltrate the Avengers in #20, but, like Wonder Man, he couldn't go through with the plan and rescued the quartet, even though he became a wanted man again. His conflict with Hawkeye would surface for years to come, but that's a tale for later on.

Finally, in *Avengers* #26, the old order changed a bit for the better. In a crossover from *Tales to Astonish*, the Wasp returned from limbo, got kidnapped by Attuma, broke free and alerted Captain America's band. She promptly got shanghaied again by The Beetle for The Collector, a mysterious villain who wanted a complete set of Avengers. Henry Pym came a-runnin', revealing his secret identity to Cap and crew, but admitted that he no longer had a costume and that size-changing might prove dangerous to his body now. By the most *amazing* coincidence, the Scarlet Witch had been working on a new costume for him, in hopes that he'd come back! Pym donned the blue-and-yellow garb, shimmied up to 25 feet tall, and took a brand new alias. Or, as the title put it, "Among Us Walks. . .a *Goliath!*" The Wasp was rescued and all was put aright, except that Goliath was stuck at a height of ten feet; to shrink any further would kill him.

The addition of Goliath's power and the Wasp's perkiness finally yanked the Avengers out of the doldrums, and Goliath's moodiness and search for a cure were an undercurrent of the rest of the Stan Lee issues. Hawkeye finally admitted his respect for Captain America and became his biggest booster; Pietro and Wanda dropped out due to slackening powers; and the remaining four heroes got it on with the Black Widow (who reformed and became a heroine), the Swordsman and Power Man, a race of underground Incas, and the racist Sons of the Serpent. Finally, in #35, during a battle with the Living Laser, Goliath regained his shrinking powers. That was one of two changes. The other was that Stan Lee had stepped out as scripter, and Roy Thomas was a more-than-worthy replacement.!

Thomas, just beginning his tenure as a comics scripter, was the first of the "fan-pros"—a member of comics fandom who became a professional—and the unquestioned king of the genre. His monumental stint on *Conan* has eclipsed the other work he's done, but if not for the Cimmerian, Roy would be primarily recognized as *the* scripter of *The Avengers*. In his eight-year hitch, Thomas would add and subtract heroes, define personalities, revive Golden Age characters, guest-star every hero this side of Powerhouse Pepper, and write everything from "message" stories to full-blown space opera. It began with the two-parter in #36 and #37 that reintroduced Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch and built from there. The trick was never to let the team grow static; if you missed two issues, you didn't know the current Avengers lineup.

Hercules battled the Assemblers under the spell of the Enchantress, then became their house guest under a year-long exile and eventually became a team member. Captain America dropped out, dropped back in, dropped right back out, and came back on a more-or-less permanent basis. Then, with *Avengers* #41, the foremost Avengers artist entered the fray; John Buscema, penciller supreme, took command. Together, he and Thomas turned out a steady stream of epics that have rarely ever been equalled in super-team fare, except by the Lee-Kirby *Fantastic Four*. The inking was improved as well, especially when George Klein and Tom Palmer wielded the brush.

Anyway, after a battle with the Black Widow's ex-husband, the Red Guardian, a premiere Annual which pitted them against the Mandarin and a passel of bad guys, and one issue by Don Heck in which Earth's Mightiest Heroes took on the Super-Adaptoid, plus a one-issue conflict with the Whirlwind, ne the Human Top, the stage was set for the third era of the Avengers. Captain America took a leave of absence; Hercules left for home, to find Olympus deserted through the machinations of Typhon the Titan, Goliath lost his growth powers, and, just to make things worse, "Magneto Walked the Earth!" Returned from outer space, the malevolent mutant and his toady, the Toad, captured Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch and convinced them to rejoin the fold, and clobbered the three remaining Avengers without half trying. In the midst of all this, Dane Whitman, the nephew of the villainous Black Knight, became a new, heroic Black Knight and briefly aided the downcast Avengers. But he didn't join, and something had to be done to boost the heroes above the power level of a Boy Scout troop. Thankfully, issue #51 saw Iron Man and Thor returning for an issue, and Goliath changed costumes and became a giant again. Then, in the next issue, the Avengers became the first integrated super-team* in comics history, as Captain America sponsored his newfound friend The Black Panther for membership. The Panther got his baptism of fire rescuing the threesome—Hawkeye, Goliath and Wasp—from the Grim Reaper, in reality the brother of Wonder Man who sought revenge for his sibling's death. Next item on the agenda: find Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch.

That came about in #53, in a crossover which pitted both the Avengers and the X-Men against Magneto in a knock-down drag-out. In the end, the Toad, Quicksilver and Wanda won free, and Magneto fell from an airship to his apparent doom at sea. It was *so* apparent that the last panel showed his helmet floating away, but that was only a red-and-purple herring. The Black Knight flew back in for a fracas with the new Masters of Evil (Klaw, Whirlwind, Radioactive Man and Melter) and their leader, the mysterious Crimson Cowl, who turned out to be a robot named Ultron-5. More on *him* later, to be sure.

In issue #56, Captain America came back for a monumental issue that sent the Avengers on a time-trip back to 1945, wherein we learned the true circumstances of Bucky Barnes' demise. For a few fateful minutes, the Avengers accidentally materialized in that era and battled Baron Zemo, but faded away just as abruptly and then returned to their own era, having truly discerned that Bucky was dead beyond all doubt.

Still, this tale was only the lead-in to a truly cataclysmic *Avengers Annual* #2, in which Cap, Goliath, Hawkeye and the Wasp found they had "returned" to an *alternate* earth, ruled over by none other than. . .Giant-Man, the Wasp, Thor and the Hulk! Manipulated by the Scarlet Centurion, a time-travelling super-villain who proved to be none other than Kang the Conqueror, the "original" Avengers had been induced to mop up the floor with the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the X-Men, Sub-Mariner, Dr. Strange, Nick Fury, Daredevil and every last single super-villain on the entire blessed planet! In essence, the Centurion's plan was to have the 1968 Avengers oppose and defeat their 1963 counterparts, which they did, and then defeat the less-powerful heroes himself, conquering the world at least. He came within a proverbial hair's breath of doing so when Ant-Man triggered a time machine to send him back to his own era. As the final touch, The Watcher himself stepped in to erase everybody's memory of the affair and returned the Earth's Mightiest to their rightful continuum. Business went on, as usual.

Well. . .*maybe*. Because, in *Avengers* #57, for the first time we were admonished to "Behold. . .*The Vision!*"

*Unless you count the Legion of Superheroes, which boasted a green-skinned Brainiac 5, and the JLA's Martian Manhunter, as being "integrated."

The Vision, who borrowed the name of the old Timely hero but little else, was a red-skinned, dark-eyed android who had the power to alter his density, making himself massive, heavy and super-powerful, or ethereal, intangible and able to float in the air. Moreover, he could fire powerful bolts of heat from his artificial eyes. As such, he proved an apt agent for his "creator," Ultron-5, against the Avengers. But in the midst of battle, the rage left him and he switched sides, leading the four heroes to Ultron-5's secret lair. In the end, Ultron was supposedly destroyed, and a kid kicked his metallic head around a sandlot to the tune of Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias."

The next issue brought Captain America, Thor and Iron Man back to the fold as the Vision's origins were investigated. Ultron-5 turned out to be a robot built by Hank Pym, which erased his memory of the event, and then programmed the android Vision with the brain patterns of none other than Wonder Man! The assembled Avengers accepted The Vision into their ranks, trusting him as they would a fellow human, and, in a gentle full-page scene, the reader learned that "Even an Android Can Cry!"

Soon afterwards, Goliath changed his identity to that of Yellowjacket, a stinger-powered super-doer who claimed to have wiped out Henry Pym and proceeded to marry the Wasp before his real identity was revealed. (This was the second superhero wedding in Marvel history, following the 1965 nupitals of Reed and Sue Richards.)

While the newlyweds honeymooned, Dr. Strange and the Black Knight dropped in for a crossover with *Dr. Strange* #61 to enlist the aid of the Black Panther, the Vision and Hawkeye in battling the unleashed Asgardian monsters, Ymir and Surtur. The demons ended up braining each other with such force that they faded back into their home dimension. The Panther, in Wakanda for the first time since becoming an Avenger, then faced the menace of M'Baku, the Man-Ape, regent in his home nation who now plotted to destroy T'Challa and gain power permanently. All he succeeded in doing was clobbering himself with a giant Panther statue. So it goes. (As most stories since then have proved, Wakandan politics are *never* dull.)

#63 broke John Buscema's long streak on *The Avengers* as Gene Colan began his short pencilling stint. (Buscema, at the time, had his hands full with the double-sized *Silver Surfer* mag.) Anyway, his first issue wrapped up plot threads from *Captain Marvel* as Hank Pym, now permanently Yellowjacket and bereft of his growth powers, and the Wasp returned to the fold. The Black Widow, however, had the bad luck to get trapped by the conglomerate of the Mad Thinker, the Puppet Master and Egghead, and Hawkeye, realizing that it would take more than a bow-slinger to stop them, grabbed a new bare-chested costume and downed Pym's growth formula, becoming Goliath II!! Thomas's sneaky switchover worked, and in the next issue the Avengers were allied with big time gangster Barney Barton, who gave his life to help them save the world from Egghead. At the end, Barney called Goliath II "Clint" just before he died in the hero's giant hands. When Yellowjacket asked about it, Goliath responded, "Why *shouldn't* he know my real name, Hank? After all, he *was. . .my brother!*" In the next issue, Colan's last, Clint Barton brought Egghead and his former mentor, the Swordsman, to justice.

Barry Smith took over as penciller for a pair of issues and produced his first really impressive work for Marvel, this time as Ultron-6, constructed of Adamantium, a metal so strong that even Thor's hammer bounced off like a doctor's reflex tester. Iron Man also returned to the fold for this tale, the third part of which was handled by Sal Buscema, John's brother, in his first-ever pencilling appearance. Boosted by the excellent inking of Sam Grainger, Sal aided Roy's efforts to lay Ultron-6 to rest (at least for a while) and continued on for another three-parter which brought practically all the Avengers and the Black Knight, who finally became a member, against Kang, the Grandmaster, the brand-new Squadron Sinister and The Invaders some seven years before that team was even conceived. (The other side of that particular coin turned up in *Invaders Annual* #1.) #72, Sal's last issue for a time, picked up the threads of the cancelled *Captain Marvel* and *Nick Fury* comics, introduced the twelve-member crime cartel called Zodiac, and revealed that Scorpio had actually been Nick Fury's brother. (Jim Steranko has called that a lie, but what does *he* know?)

Frank Giacoia stepped in for a rare pencilling job in #73, as the Black Panther solo-battled against the Sons of the Serpent, who worked behind the scenes of a television debate to bring the country into a race war. The Panther got slapped in irons, but Hank, Jan and Clint saved the day and exposed the two Supreme Serpents as the partisan TV debaters. (As a sidelight, this tale introduced the Panther's long-time love interest, singer Monica Lynne.)

The second part of the Serpents tale was done by a returning John Buscema, triumphantly inked by the talented Tom Palmer. Big John's run this time would last through #85, broken only by brother Sal on issue #78. Quicksilver returned to the fold to gain the aid of Goliath, the Panther, the Vision, Iron Man and Thor in rescuing the Scarlet Witch from marrying Arkon, the extra-dimensional barbarian. (Meantime, Yellowjacket and the Wasp left for the cold climate of Alaska to uncrowd the membership.) #77 introduced unscrupulous financier Cornelius Van Lunt, later to be proven Taurus of the Zodiac. #78 and #79 brought back the Grim Reaper, Man-Ape, Swordsman, Living Laser and Power Man as the Lethal Legion, in which issues the Reaper learned he was nearly a brother to the Vision. (How would you feel if your brother, who used to be an embezzler, turned into an android?) With issue #80, the Indian hero *Red Wolf* made his debut, and Daredevil eventually guest-starred in a three-issue battle against the power of Zodiac. "Come On In—The Revolution's Fine!" (#83) introduced The Valkyrie, in a way, as a persona of The Enchantress who turned the Wasp, Medusa, the Black Widow and the Scarlet Witch against the male Avengers in a token "women's lib" tale. Roy Thomas and his then-wife, Jean, made a cameo appearance in which they were introduced to the Assemblers. "Oh, *wow!*" gushed Jeanie. "Which one of you is *Mrs. Peel?*"

"The Sword and the Sorceress" (#84) was an overstuffed tale featuring the Black Knight, Thor, Goliath, the Vision, the Panther, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch against Arkon and the Enchantress; all that happened, more or less, was that the Knight lost his sword, forming the basis for a future story. *Avengers* #85 and #86 took Goliath and crew to an alternate earth in which the Squadron Supreme, a counterpart of Earth-One's Justice League and Marvel-Earth's Squadron Sinister, held sway. Sal Buscema was back for the second part of this tale, and stayed with the book for a seven-issue stretch.

Roy's tenure on the book was waning, but each succeeding issue held a few surprises, even though the art was fading. The Black Panther's origin was

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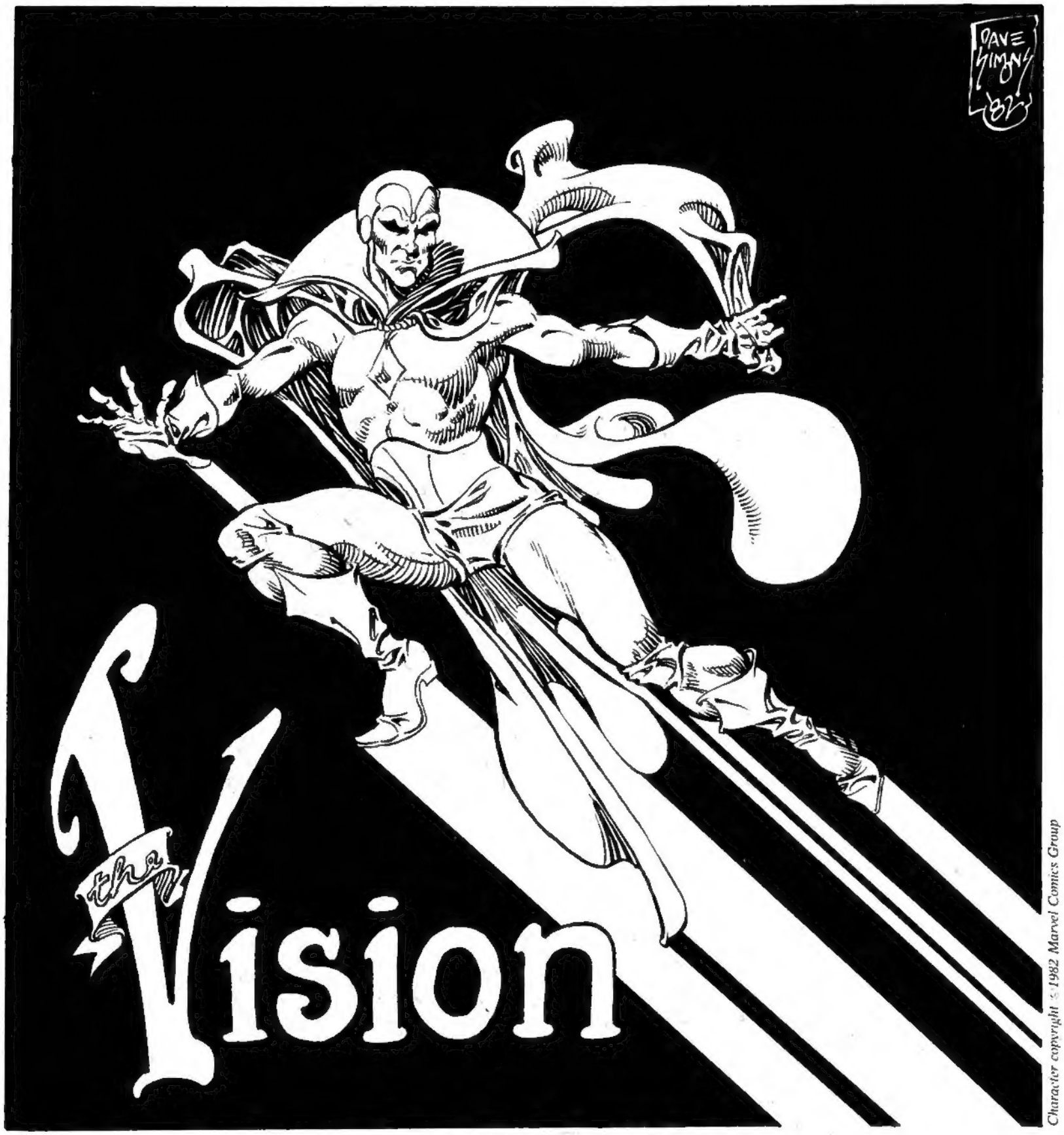

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revealed in #87; Harlan Ellison himself plotted issue #88, featuring the incredible Hulk in a crossover with *Hulk* #140. *Then,* in issue #89, came the monumental *Skrull-Kree War!!* This apocalyptic space battle, complete with Captain Marvel, the Inhumans, Rick Jones, Ronan, the Super-Skrull, a pack of revived Timely heroes, and, probably, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, is covered elsewhere in this book. Suffice it to say that, thanks to Roy Thomas and Neal Adams, the Avengers finally had an epic ranking with the Galactus Trilogy. Their battles were to be cosmic in scope for many issues thereafter.

The three-parter that followed, in issues #98-100, brought back Barry Smith for a final fling. Goliath II had reverted to being Hawkeye again, and Ares, the Greek god of war, had vowed to bring Earth, Asgard and Olympus under his rule. It took the one-time-only team of Thor, Hercules, Iron Man, the Black Knight, Captain America, the Black Panther, Ant-Man, the Wasp, the Scarlet Witch, the Hulk (now a Defender), Hawkeye, the Vision and even The Swordsman to stop him. By this time, Thor, Cap and Iron Man were more-or-less permanent fixtures in the book to boost circulation, continuity be hanged.

Harlan Ellison popped back in to plot *Avengers* #101, "Five Dooms To Save Tomorrow," pencilled by Rich Buckler. Buckler's advent signalled the first of the Second Generation Marvel Bullpen coming to the fore on *The Avengers,* and #102, co-plotted by Chris Claremont, signified even further change. Roy's last three-parter, in #102-104, brought back The Sentinels, killed off Larry Trask and hinted at The Vision's body being over thirty years old. But if had not been created in 1967 by Ultron, then *who. . .?* (A question that would dangle for many issues to come.)

Finally, Roy Thomas gave over the reins of *The Avengers.* Stan Lee had become publisher, Roy became the new editor, and his writing would now be confined to *Conan* and *The Fantastic Four.* A great era had ended. A great era was to begin. Roy's replacement was the greatest of the Second Generation scripters—none other than Steve Englehart.

Englehart, who gained fame as writer for Captain America, Dr. Strange, the Justice League, Mister Miracle and the definitive Batman with Marshall Rogers, came well-prepared for his 49-issue stint on *The Avengers.* Unlike many Second Generation scribes, Englehart genuinely *understood* the characters he was called on to continue, saw them as three-dimensional personalities, and kept in touch with past continuity so as not to violate his foundations. One of his first tasks was to complete a personality profile on each Avenger, past and present, which he admitted in the letters column. Would that his successors came equipped with such care—or talent! His first few issues were Thomas imitations, but the book soon became definitively his *own* stories.

The 105th issue of *Avengers,* drawn by John Buscema and Jim Mooney, saw Iron Man, Hawkeye, the Scarlet Witch (whose brother, Quicksilver, had left the team to woo Crystal, the Inhuman, away from her old—er—flame, the Human Torch), the Black Panther, Thor and The Vision, together with a guest-starring Sif, battle a group of mutants created in the past by Magneto in the Savage Land. It was no great shakes as a debut issue, but at least it was passable.

A trilogy in #106-108 brought back the Space Phantom and the Grim Reaper together with HYDRA and Captain Marvel and explained how Captain America, who had revealed his secret identity in 1969, need not fear, as the Phantom had removed that knowledge from the mind of everyone on earth. A pretty tall order, but, as the Phantom himself admitted, Cap's mind had to be

absolutely at peace to effect a brain transplant, and the restoring of his secret identity worked better than est. Ah, well. Rich Buckler, George Tuska, Dave Cockrum, Jim Starlin and Don Heck shared honors on the art.

The next issue, #109, saw Hawkeye donning his own purple uniform again and cutting out of the team for the first time; he'd be back, but not before hanging out with Daredevil, the Black Widow, the Defenders and Spider-Man. Don Heck was reinstated as artist for several issues to come, and illustrated the next two-parter, a crossover with *Daredevil* #99 that brought the Avengers, the X-Men (in limbo since the cancellation of their comic), Daredevil and the Black Widow together under one roof to conquer Magneto. DD turned down the group's offer of Avengership, but the Black Widow, at long last, accepted. She lasted all of one more issue before returning to Matt Murdock's arms.

Bob Brown began his tenure as Avengers artist with #113, "Your Young Men Shall Slay Visions!" Therein, the Scarlet Witch and The Vision announced they were in love to the world at large, inciting a suicide squad of mad bombers to try and destroy Vizh ("Mark my words, if the Vision finds his place in society. . .all humanity will become second-class citizens, under a super-race of robots!" Ah, yes.) In that issue, Tony Stark and Don Blake finally admitted the obvious to each other: they knew each other's true identity.

"The Night of the Swordsman," in issue #114, showed how the blade-wielding villain repented and was accepted into the Avengers. His lover, Mantis, a Vietnamese bar girl with a superhuman mastery of kung fu (she even took out Thor once!), became a hanger-on, not yet an official Avenger. She added a lot of barefooted sex appeal to the book and appeased any martial arts fanatics who might have been hanging around on the fringes. Also, she referred to herself as "this one" a lot. It was enough to drive this one up a wall.

The next story began with a quest for the Black Knight and led to the classic Avengers-Defenders Clash, covered elsewhere herein. In #119, the Avengers returned to that famed superhero hangout, Rutland, Vermont, where the Collector once again attempted to plastic-bag them for his files. It ended with Iron Man stopping a horde of vampire bats and Loki rooming with his host, Tom Fagan.

By the time The Swordsman had been wounded by gunfire, which figured largely in the three-parter that followed, putting the Avengers against the Zodiac. Taurus, revealed as Cornelius Van Lunt, attempted to strand the rebellious Zodiac members with the Avengers in a spacebound warehouse (!), but the heros and villains returned to Earth thanks to the machinations of Libra, a blindfolded Zodiac member. When asked why, he replied, "You see, I thought *Mantis* had been trapped *with* you. . .and I am her *father!*"

Wow!

Hell really started a-poppin' in the next opus, #123-124, as Libra revealed to an angry Mantis that he, a former German mercenary, had married a Vietnamese woman and sired a daughter before his crime-boss brother-in-law, Monsieur Khruhl, could burn down his house with his wife in it. Libra, blinded, somehow carried his daughter to safety and wandered smack onto the doorstep of the Priests of Pama. They taught his daughter the martial arts and taught him to use his four remaining senses Daredevil-style, until he broke and ran back into a life of crime in Zodiac. To avenge his lady, the frazzled Swordsman took off for Vietnam to bring back Khruhl's hide, but ended up being tortured by the gangster. He broke, revealing the location of the Paman temple. Khruhl's gang proceeded to slaughter the priests, but, just as the Avengers arrived on the scene, he was dispatched himself by a monstrous alien dragon called the Star-Stalker. (Complicated enough for you? Just wait.) John Buscema and Dave Cockrum plugged in for the next two issues. The Avengers defeated the Star-Stalker, who revealed that the Priests of Pama were actually pacifist Kree, and Mantis began changing her affections for the Swordsman, who, after all, had buckled in the clinch, to yearn for The Vision. This caused the Scarlet Witch no end of worrying, of course.

But such concerns were put aside as, in issue #125, the Assemblers faced down the armada of Thanos! This story brought their appearances in *Captain Marvel* #25-32 into synch, as they helped decimate a horde of alien criminals, but, unbeknownst to them, Thanos moved the earth just a hair into another time continuum and thus stranded them. How they got it all together again was told by Jim Starlin in *Captain Marvel* #33.

After that, Bob Brown was back for his last pencil-job on #126. Klaw and Solarr menaced the Avengers and both the Black Panther and Captain America decided to leave the team, the Panther to begin his *Jungle Action* stint and Cap to become The Nomad. Just before he did so, *Giant Size Avengers* #1 (written by a back-for-one-issue Roy Thomas and drawn in a Kirbyesque manner by Rich Buckler) brought back the Golden Age Whizzer, told the history of the All-Winners Squad, and revealed the unimaginable: that the Whizzer and the late Miss America were the parents of Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch! (This wasn't exactly true, but as you will learn later on, we haven't been able to make sense of this origin business yet.) The bulk of the issue was spent stopping the Whizzer's radioactive mutant son, Nuklo.

"Bride and Doom" (#127) continued the crossover trend with the Avengers, the Fantastic Four and the Inhumans attending the wedding of Quicksilver and Crystal in the Hidden Land. Ultron-7, in the body of Omega (not the Unknown hero but an android powered by—ahem—prejudice against the Alpha Primitives), crashed the ceremony and was soundly trounced by a mental bolt from Franklin Richards in *Fantastic Four* #150. The FF left, but Agatha Harkness stayed on to teach the Scarlet Witch some spells, and she needed them in #128's encounter with Necrodamus, an old Defenders foe.

At the end of that tale, the Watcher himself positioned a star over Avengers Mansion to signal the coming of the Celestial Madonna, whoever *she* was. Kang the Conqueror wasn't sure *himself*, but he showed up to capture the Scarlet Witch, Mantis (now resenting the Swordsman and making an out-and-out play for the Vision) and Agatha Harkness just to make sure. He grabbed all the Avengers save for the Swordsman, who got the drop on him just before being stopped by. . .Pharoah Rama-Tut!

As all good Marvelites will remember, Rama-Tut is another of Kang's identities, and in *Giant-Size Avengers* #2 it was revealed (by Englehart and Cockrum) how, after becoming sated with conquest, an older Kang reassumed his identity of Rama-Tut, went back to Egypt and had himself put into suspended animation until the moment when Kang would strike in 1974. Hawkeye returned to the fold to aid Rama-Tut and the Swordsman in freeing the Vision, Thor and Iron Man. As Kang and Rama clashed, time itself became visible and revealed that Mantis was, herself unsuspecting, the Celestial Madonna. Kang trained a blaster on her to finish her off, but Rama-Tut deflected his aim and the Swordsman, leaping in front of his former lover, took a blast of killing energy. His body lay steaming before his comrades, just as Rama-Tut and Kang, still struggling, vanished into another time. Mantis cradled the Swordsman as he died, weeping. "This one must right the wrongs she has done you! She was young—proud—and she used you so badly! She sees it now!" To no avail. Forgiving her, The Swordsman died.

This issue sparked no end of controversial mail (Sample: "If the Swordsman had to die, did it have to be in defending that two-timing little _____?") but life went on, and so did the Avengers, with art by Sal Buscema and Joe Staton. Specifically, they went on to Vietnam, to bury the Swordsman at the foot of a large tree in the temple grounds of the Priests of Pama. There, the heroes met up with the Titanium Man, the Crimson Dynamo, and the Radioactive Man, Communists all and villains at times in America—but, in this occupied country, genuine super-heroes! After a mistaken brawl with their nemesis, the Avengers got down to the serious business of tracing Mantis' origin; her own memories were not corroborated by physical evidence.

In the meantime, Kang was back in business. He and Rama-Tut were plucked from the void into another void—Limbo, where Immortus ruled. After putting Rama-Tut in a glass prison, Immortus challenged Kang to assemble a band of villains to attack the Avengers. Accordingly, Kang chose to materialize a group of beings already dead in 1975—the Frankenstein Monster, Wonder Man, Midnight, Zemo, and the original Human Torch and the Ghost. The Avengers were then abducted into Immortus' castle and, before the mess was over, Iron Man had been killed and revived (in a manner of speaking), the Vision reaffirmed his faith in Wanda, Immortus was revealed as still *another* identity of Kang, and the Human Torch made the most fateful discovery of all: "I *know* that body (the Vision's)! It's *crimson* now—but somehow, by some insane trick of fate—it's *mine!*"

And, finally, after Kang had gotten away again and the unliving enemies had been returned to their various times, Immortus aided the Avengers in discovering the origin of the original Human Torch, the Vision, Mantis, the Kree, the Skrulls and anybody else in a hundred-mile radius. The Swordsman's body, glowing green, rose from the grave. Libra turned up. The Vision discovered that the original Human Torch had been refashioned by Ultron-5 and Phineas Horton, the Torch's creator—subsequently killed by Ultron—into The Vision. Meantime, the Skrulls and Kree were depicted in their first conflict, and the origin of the star-lost pacifist Kree and the Cotati, an intelligent plant-people, was told. Moondragon, fresh from *Daredevil*, made the scene. Kang got foiled by the Space Phantom. The Vision and the Scarlet Witch and Agatha Harkness foiled Dormammu and Umar (now, where did THEY come from?). It was revealed that the oldest living Cotati was the tree under which the Swordsman was buried, had reanimated his body, and was now to propose to Mantis to make her the Celestial Madonna ("Woman, have you not seen that you are to *marry that tree?*"). So saying, Immortus performed a double ceremony: Wanda married the Vision and the "Swordsman" married Mantis, after which the latter two converted themselves to energy and faded off into the universe, never to return.

(Well, maybe. Months later, during Englehart's tenure on the Justice League, a mysterious green woman called Willow who knew the martial arts and referred to herself as "This one" turned up. She said she had come from another dimension, but added that her old friends would not recognize her. She hasn't been seen since.)

After a one-issue break in which a Steve Englehart "Beast" story was reprinted, Thor, Iron Man, Hawkeye and Moondragon came home and started searching for new applicants to fill the Avenger gap. Moondragon was accepted as the newest Avenger—she of the bald head, mental powers and icy temperment. In quick succession, the Black Panther, Quicksilver, Captain America, the Black Widow and Hercules all refused. However, Yellowjacket and the Wasp were more than willing to return to the fold, and Hawkeye, equipped with Dr. Doom's time machines, went looking for the Black Knight.

And the most popular new Avenger of all turned up for an audition. *The Beast*, the former X-Men who sported dark blue fur and a fun-loving disposition, arrived just as The Stranger, or someone who looked very much like him, materialized and injured the Wasp in combat. While Yellowjacket's wife lay imperilled in a hospital, the other Avengers tracked down the "Stranger"—who proved to be the Toad hiding behind an illusion. In #139, Yellowjacket foiled the Whirlwind's murder attempt on the Wasp, but himself became trapped as a maverick microbe felled him and forced him to grow larger. . .and larger. . .and larger. Eventually, the Vision plunged right into YJ's heart with a curative serum, and Hank Pym snapped back to normal in a bed beside his recuperating wife. The Scarlet Witch also returned, and, in the next issue, so did Captain America.

Moreover, #141 introduced one of the great Avengers pencillers, George Perez. This issue saw Englehart tying up some plotlines left over from his *Captain America* tenure, as the assembled Avengers battled the mighty conglomerate of Roxxon Oil and the Brand Corporation and their other-earth allies, the Squadron Supreme. One other thing: Patsy Walker, Marvel's longtime teenage comics star, joined with the Avengers in this adventure, found the Costume of the Cat, an old superheroine, in a Brand warehouse, and donned it to become the happy-go-lucky Hellcat! The wackiest heroine around, Patsy aided the Earth's Mightiest Heroes in their several-issue war on the Squadron's business-dominated world. Meanwhile, in the past, specifically in Tombstone, Arizona circa 1873, Thor and Moondragon found Hawkeye preparing to do battle with Kang, who had taken charge of the area. Their allies were none other than Kid Colt, the Night Rider, the Ringo Kid, the Rawhide Kid and the Two-Gun Kid! Thor battled Kang to a standstill, causing the monarch from 4000 A.D. to hype his force-field to the nth power. Abruptly, Kang discorporated into his primal atoms, the citadel in Tombstone vanished, and Immortus proclaimed "his very atoms split and spread throughout all time, never again to be rejoined. . .Now, Kang no longer exists. . .and Rama-Tut shall never come into being! Neither, too, shall Immortus have been! The circle is broken! We are *free!*" So saying, Immortus faded from view.

(It was a deceptive ending. Immortus had, indeed, survived, and confessed to Thor years later that he had lied to prevent their further investigation. Kang, however, has not reappeared to this day.)

After an interruptive two-issue break in which Tony Isabella pitted the team against the Assassin (#146-147), the Avengers cleaned up on the Brand Corporation and Thor decided to leave the band, feeling himself too powerful to remain. In issues #150-151, the new roster was chosen. Moondragon arrogantly left, and took Hellcat with her as a pupil; she would later join The Defenders. Thor exited as well. That left the Vision, the Scarlet Witch, the

Beast, Iron Man, Captain America, the Wasp and Yellowjacket to shout "Avengers Assemble!" to the crowd milling outside their mansion.

Just as they did so, a large crate left on the lawn split open.

Wonder Man, dead some 12 years, staggered out.

That was the way a new era began. Steve Englehart was gone, and his like would not be seen again. Gerry Conway and Jim Shooter scripted fill-in pages for #151; #152 and 153 were solely done by Conway, who was backed up by John Buscema for his last return to *The Avengers*. Conway would continue as writer and editor through Issue #157, except for #156 which was done by Shooter. Perez would continue as artist after Buscema's fill-in.

As it turned out, Wonder Man had been brought back to pseudolife by the second Black Talon, a voodoo priest hired—though we would not know it for some time to come—by the Grim Reaper. After the Avengers cleaned up on the evil houngan in New Orleans, they returned home to find the old Whizzer back in action, and the Living Laser in possession of the Serpent Crown of Lemuria, a mystical relic. This gave him control of Wonder Man for a time, whom he used to attempt the Avengers' destruction, but, in a tale which continued in *Avengers Annual* #6, Simon Williams won freedom, regained his consciousness and became a quasi-Avenger. The Living Laser, the renegade General Pollock and Nuklo were defeated with the Whizzer's aid.

Back in their regular mag, the Assemblers began a three-issue saga that crossed-over with *Super-Viallain Team-Up* and brought them into conflict with Attuma, Doctor Doom, Sub-Mariner and Tyrak, a new Atlantean baddie. When the dust had cleared, they were still mystified as to Wonder Man's "resurrection." To top that, Conway's last issue saw the Black Knight's statue reanimated and destroyed; who the reanimator was has not yet been revealed, although an issue of *Dr. Strange* broadly hinted that it was Thanos.

With #158, Jim Shooter took the helm as writer and continued, with interruptions and aid from Bill Mantlo and David Michelinie, through #177. The tension between Wonder Man and the Vision came to fever pitch, with an embittered android vowing to soon leave his wife. Graviton, a new villain, made a two-issue appearance. Then, in #160, the Grim Reaper finally surfaced, after Thor and the Black Panther returned to the fold, to announce that he had paid off the Black Talon to raise his brother from "death." In the end, it was Wonder Man himself who brought the Reaper to bay, and stood over his fallen sibling in shame.

#161 and #162 brought back Ultron for yet another go-round, and introduced Jocasta, a robot woman into whom the evil automaton planned to transfer Janet Pym's persona. During this story, signs of Hank Pyms' paranoia and mental breakdown were revealed—which, unfortunately would lead him into villainy in 1982. But that was still five years down the line. In the meantime, Iron Man and the Beast joined three Champions—Hercules, Black Widow and Iceman—agains their old foe Typhon in a George Tuska-drawn story. Then County Nefaria returned, leading a new lethal Legion in a three-issue battle. It was finally revealed (or better yet, alleged) that Wonder Man had not truly died in 1964 but was lying dormant until completing his metamorphosis over a decade later. (I still don't believe it.)

Avengers Annual #7 fits in here, with the monumental climax of the Adam Warlock saga. Written and drawn by Jim Starlin, this issue told of the ultimate battle against Thanos, who had finally collected five of the six soul gems and combined their power into a huge jewel that could cause a sun to go nova. Warlock turned to the team of Captain Mavel, Moondragon, the Beast, Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, the Scarlet Witch and the Vision to help him battle the tyrant from Titan, even as his old friends Pip and Gamora died at Thanos' hands. Iron Man succeeded in destroying the huge gem, by which Thanos hoped to sacrifice the cosmos to his lover, Death, but Warlock himself was dealt a killing blow by Thanos himself. Just before his own death, Warlock's time-travelling counterpart absorbed him into the Soul Gem, in a reprise of the climax of *Warlock* #11. But he was finally at peace, "alive" in a world populated by everyone ever absorbed into the gem, both friend and enemy, "and in this oneness there can only be. . love." The war against Thanos continued into *Marvel Two-In-One Annual* #2. Thanos rallied his forces and defeated the Avengers and Captain Marvel, wrenched the gem from Warlock's brow and prepared to destroy Earth's sun. But the telepathic call of Moondragon reached Spider-Man and the Thing, who managed to free the Avengers and loose the spirit of Warlock from the soul jewel. The golden ghost wrapped his arms about the cowering Thanos and changed him into a granite statue, his menace finally ended. It was one of the best Marvel stories *ever*, to say nothing of being the greatest *Avengers Annual* epic.

Back in the regular *Avengers* book, author Shooter propelled the Mighty Ones into a cataclysmic 11-issue conflict with Michael, formerly Korvac, a computerized villain transformed into a godlike being. The Guardians of the Galaxy, Captain Marvel, Ms. Marvel, Quicksilver, the Scarlet Witch, Black Widow, Hawkeye, Iron Man, Hercules, Thor, the Vision, Moondragon, Wonder Man, the Black Panther, Captain America, Yellowjacket, the Wasp, and Jocasta wound up the spectacular conflict by getting killed to a man (save for Moony and Thor) and then restored to life, as Michael voluntarily terminated the existences of himself and his lady. Along the way the Two-Gun Kid returned to 1873 and forays were made against the Porcupine, tycoon Jason Beere, Ultron, Tyrak and the Collector.

Steve Gerber and Carmine Infantino dropped in for #178's Beast solo-battle with the robotic Manipulator. *Avengers Annual #8* followed, by Roger Slifer and George Perez, which pitted the Assemblers against a three-man Squadron Sinister. #179-180 told the tale of a bizarre battle with a mutant man-hawk and a colossal living stature while a baddie called The Stinger menaced the Avengers at home, courtesy of Tom DeFalco and Jim Mooney. Then the fill-ins ended and David Michalinie, former writer for such strips as *Swamp Thing* and *Jonah Hex*, came aboard. The stories became pleasant but pedestrian, with the added asset of artist John Byrne.

The new era was kicked off by government regulatory agent Henry Peter Gyrich, who demanded that the Avengers pare down its active membership to Iron Man, the Vision, Captain America, the Scarlet Witch, the Beast and the Wasp, with the Falcon being inducted to integrate the group in the Black Panther's absence. Right in the middle of this political satire appeared an old puppet maker with uncanny mystic powers who was none other than the Scarlet Witch's and Quicksilver's foster father! After the heroes defeated him, his adopted children vowed to return to their homeland of Transia with him to research their origins. Before this, both Ms. Marvel and the Falcon joined the Avengers' ranks to aid in a two-issue battle against the Absorbing Man.

Finally, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch returned with their mentor, Django Maximoff, to their native country. There Wanda fell under the thrall of the evil spirit Cthon, master of Modred the Mystic, and in a complex plot it was revealed that Magneto was the real father of Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch. The Avengers arived on the scene to foil the demoness, though Maximoff lost his life.

Avengers Annual #9 proved a breath of fresh air, showcasing the fine work of Bill Mantlo and Don Newton. Eight Avengers went up against Arsenal in a story that finished off plotlines from *Iron Man* satisfyingly. In issue #189, the Falcon decided to quit the team, Thor turned to his battle against the Celestials, Hawkeye battled Death-Bird and the government brought suit against The Avengers for the right to regulate their membership. The lawsuit lasted two issues, being interrupted by a free-swinging battle against the Grey Gargoyle in which Daredevil pitched in In view of the need for such heroics, the courts decided in favor of The Avengers and that was that.

Writers who followed largely forsaked the "cosmic epic" tradition of the Skrull-Kree War and the Celestial Madonna saga to dwell on fairly prosaic and conventional one- or two-issue super-villain punchouts. They weren't bad, to be sure, but they couldn't compare to the glory days of Lee, Thomas and Englehart. David Michelinie returned and the Avengers battled the Element Enemies, Inferno, Taskmaster, Red Ronin, and a stuck elevator. Some funny business featuring Wonder Man as a character actor on a kids' TV show ensued, but mainly it was business as usual. Then, in time for issue #200, Ms. Marvel got pregnant.

Pregnant. Without knowing who the father was.

"The child is father to. . .?" has become infamous for many reasons. Point one. Ms Marvel was, in essence, raped by the son of Immortus, who, against all continuity, had faded into nothingness. Point two: the birth sequence in no way resembled anything in real life, as at least one hacked-off critic pointed out. Point three: Ms Marvel decided to return to Limbo with her "son," Marcus Immortus, who was to become her lover. Shades of Semiramis! The story contained a few good battle sequences, but there wasn't a whole heck of a lot else to recommend it.

Michelinie followed this in issues #201 and 202 with an adaption of the unexcellent Avengers short story, "This Evil Undying," by Shooter. (George Perez had, by this time, returned as penciller and helped turn out an entertaining and funny solo tale of Jarvis, the Avengers' butler, in the back of #201.)

The Beast and Wonder Man double-teamed a menace from the sewers in #203, drawn by Carmine Infantino. Then, Don Newton and Alan Kupperberg pencilled one part each of a two-issue battle against the Yellow Claw, one of the few really good stories during this period. Bill Mantlo and Gene Colan turned up as creative team on the next three issues, pitting the good guys against the villain. J. Marc DeMatteis and Kupperberg did #209, a fairly memorable tale that brought back the Beast's old girlfriend, Vera.

Avengers Annual #10 fit in here, drawn exquisitely by Michael Golden and penned by an angry Chris Claremont in answer to *Avengers* #200. The story opened with Spider-Woman rescuing a powerless Carol Danvers, whom she took to Professor X of guess-which-popular-super-team for a mind-probe. In the meantime, the power-stealer, Rogue of the New Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, ripped off some of the abilities of Captain America and Thor, though these were impermanent. The whole thing led to a giant donnybrook with said Evil Mutants, where most of the action was covered in captions. Eventually, Carol revealed the truth to her former teammates. that she had never loved Marcus Immortus, who had died upon his return to Limbo, from which she escaped; that she had been used and betrayed by the Avengers when she needed help. The chastened super-heroes, a little bit wiser, departed. This, to date, was the last really good Avengers story

Gene Colan reappeared as the artist for issues #210 and #211. The first of these was Bill Mantlo's attempt to build on a prophecy of Nostradamus by placing a satellite named "Samarobryn" in orbit and featuring weather-controlling villains. At the end of this tale, the Avengers decided to reorganize—again. Jim Shooter returned to the helm with the next issue, and guest-starred every superhero this side of Hopalong Cassidy as Moondragon mentally commanded them to apply for membership. The Avengers rejected her "help,"and after she departed, the new membership stood as Captain America, Thor, the Wasp, Yellowjacket, Iron Man and Tigra, who, under Shooter, gained all the warmth and dignity of a cheap call girl. She left after five more issues.

In those selfsame issues, the Avengers first took on an elf-queen and her champion, and then, to our surprise, we found out Hank Pym was a wife-beater. The whole sorry mess of Yellowjacket's subsequent court-martial will be found in *Avengers* #213, for those who really want to read it. It seemed a sorry betrayal of one of Marvel's oldest heroes. The next opus featured the Ghost Rider, followed quickly by a two-parter guest-starring the Silver Surfer and featuring the Molecule Man as a villain. (In the story, it became apparent that Shooter did not know the original Molecule Man was *dead* and that the current villain is actually the *son* of the Molecule Man.)

#217 featured what was billed as "perhaps the most moving story you'll read this year." Which way it moved was open to debate. Yellowjacket was trapped into allying himself with Egghead, battled his former comrades, and wound up in jail. It wasn't a bad dream, was it? The next issue was another filler by J. Marc DeMatteis featuring a youth who was "Born Again. . .and Again. . .and Again" every time he died. The current issue, #219, brought back Jim Shooter again as Moondragon returned to transport the Avengers to her new home, the world of Ba-Bani, for the purpose of seducing Thor. Here the chronicle ends

The Avengers' recent doldrums have only served to point up the problems with most current Marvel comics. formula-fed writing, conservative concepts, so-so art and lack of understanding of the characters. The virtues of Lee, Thomas and Englehart have been largely thrown out the window There have been some good issues since then under Conway, Mantlo and Claremont, but these are far and few between Surprise, folks some of us still *care* about our childhood heroes.

If I had known that the astonishing Ant-Man, who himself suggested that the Avengers first band together, would wind up giving the Wasp a black eye some years down the road, I would've put *Avengers* #1 back on the rack with disgust and turned to somebody dependable like the Fantastic Four

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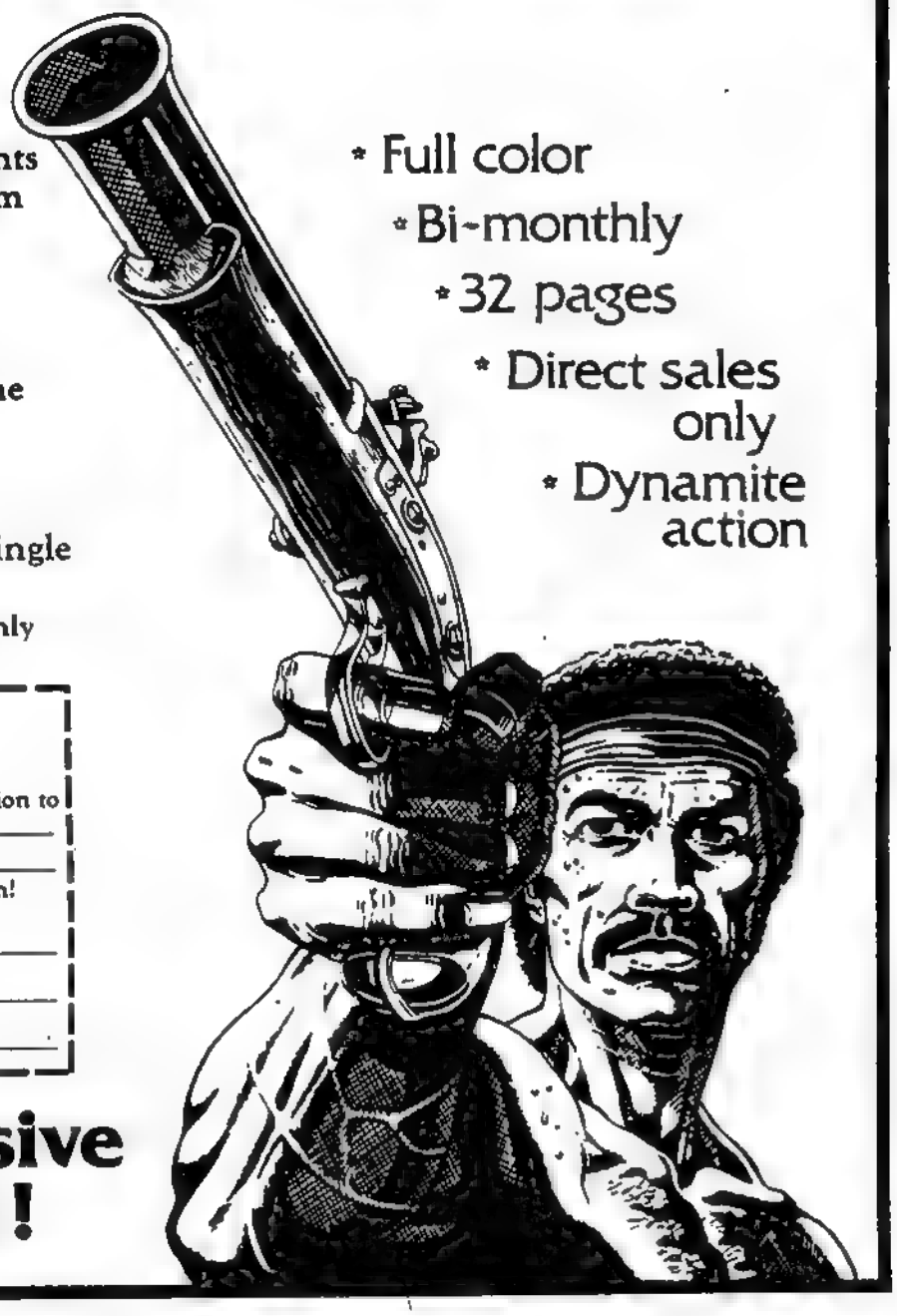
Sabre

by Don McGregor & Paul Gulacy



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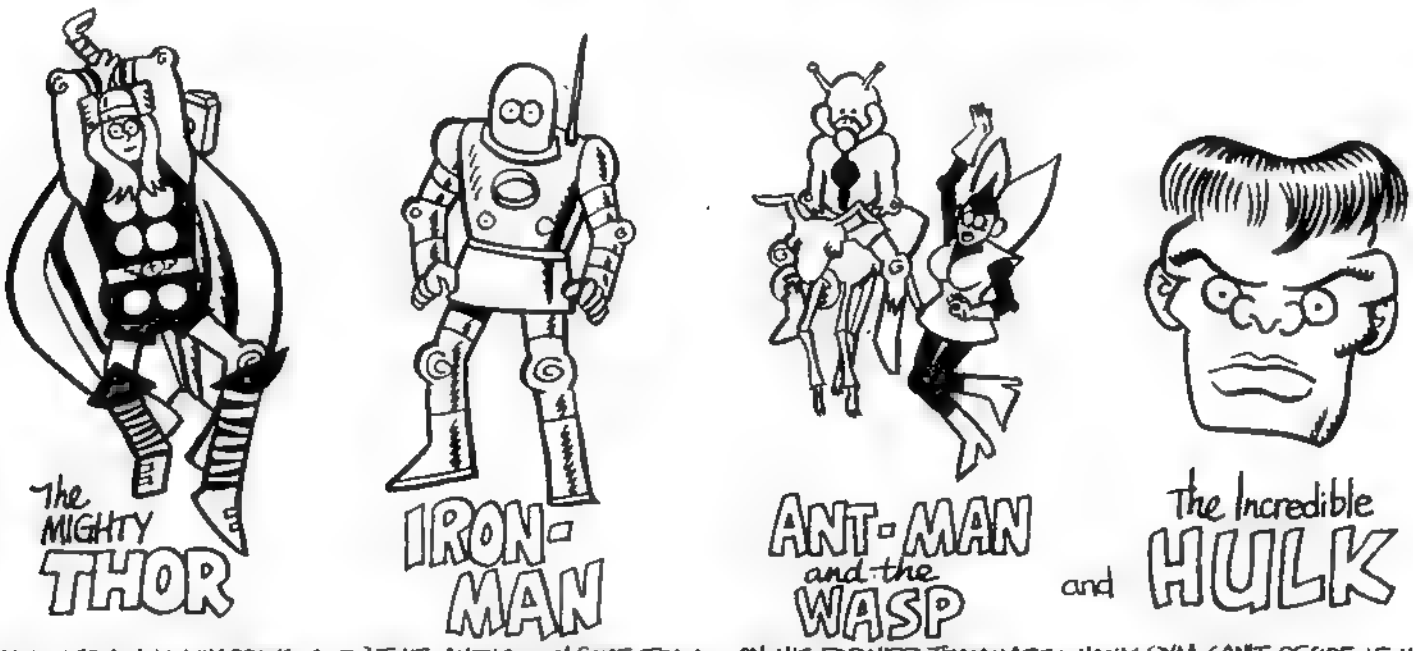
BACK DURING THE SUMMER OF 1963, THE YOUNG MARVEL COMICS GROUP EXPANDED ITS LINE A BIT WITH TWO TEAM BOOK TITLES, WE NEEDN'T CONCERN OURSELVES WITH THE X-MEN HERE; INSTEAD, LET'S LOOK AT STAN LEE AND JACK KIRBY'S MARVELOUS LITTLE LEAGUE OF JUSTICE, THE AVENGERS. OH, IT WAS TRIED AND TRUE ALRIGHT; STAN DIPPED INTO JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY, TALES OF SUSPENSE, TALES TO ASTONISH, AND TO A RECENTLY DEFUNCT MAGAZINE ENTITLED THE INCREDIBLE HULK, AND HE CAME UP WITH....



SHAKE WELL, AND WHADDAYA GOT? THE AVENGERS! SOME TEAM, eh? BUT YOU PUT A BUNCH OF ALL-STARS TOGETHER, AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS? EGO FLARE-UPS! IN THE FIRST 3 ISSUES, IT WENT SOMETHING LIKE THIS: THE HULK QUITS, AND THEN BEATS UP ON HIS FORMER TEAMMATES, HANK PYM CAN'T DECIDE IF HE'S ANT-MAN OR GIANT-MAN, AND IRON MAN KEEPS CHANGING HIS CLOTHES! THIS GROUP NEEDS HELP! LUCKILY, THE CAVALRY ARRIVES WITH THE FOURTH ISSUE, WHEN....

CAPTAIN AMERICA, THE ULTIMATE TEAM PLAYER, WAS JUST THE STABILIZING FACTOR THAT THE AVENGERS NEEDED. BEFORE LONG, THE STAR SPANGLED SENTINAL HAD EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES FIGHTING LIKE A WELL OILED MACHINE. AFTER ALL, HE GOT HIS TRAINING FIGHTING ON UNCLE SAM'S SIDE DURING THE BIG ONE, AND IT'S NO COINCIDENCE THAT OUR SIDE WON!

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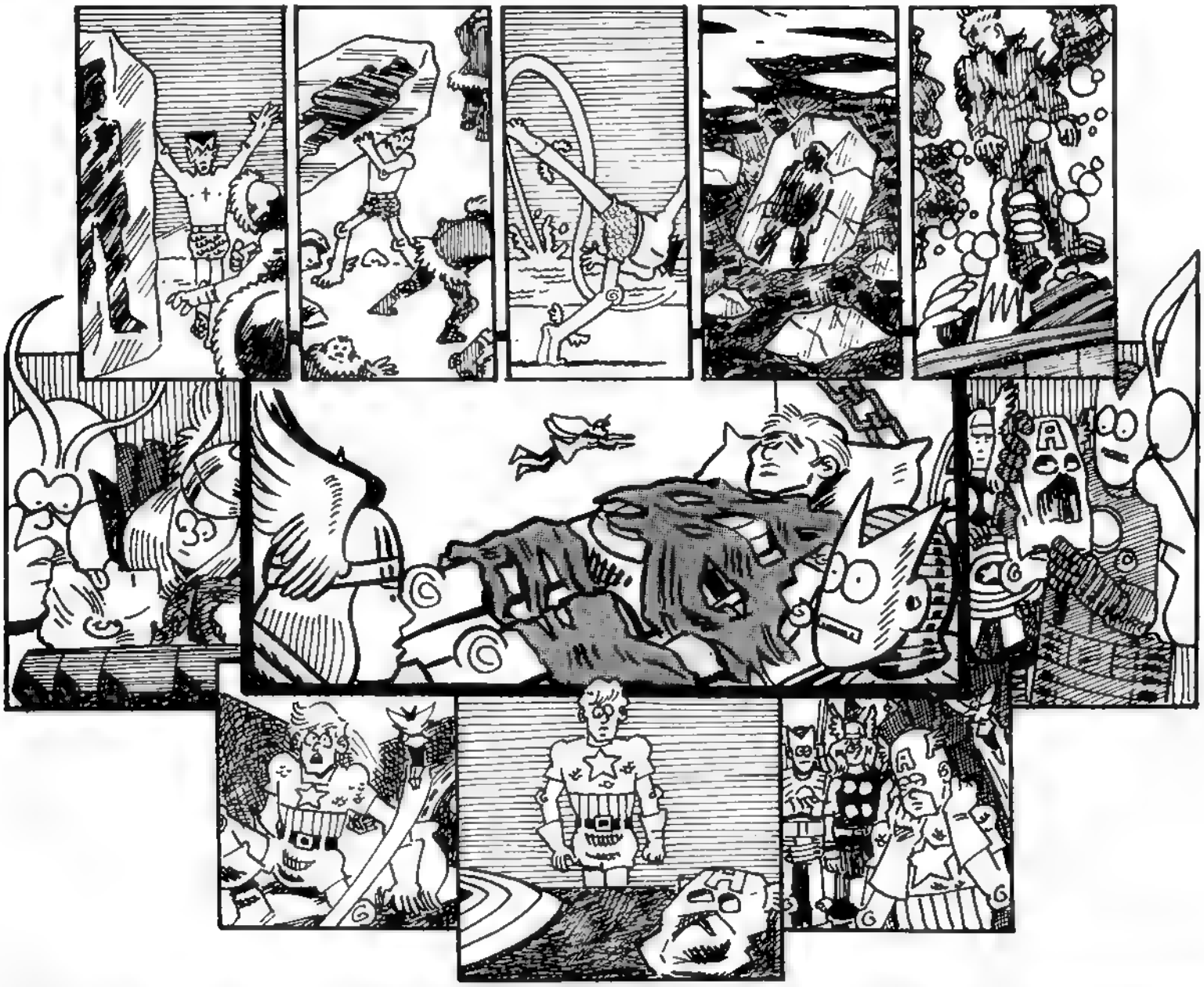
YOU ALL KNOW THE STORY OF HOW CAP WAS FROZEN IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION AT THE END OF WWII? AND HOW THE SUB-MARINER CAME UPON NAZIS WORSHIPPING CAP'S FROZEN (AND UNRECOGNIZABLE) FORM, THROWING IT IN THE JET STREAM IN A FIT OF PIQUE, WHERE THE AVENGERS SPOTTED THE THAWING BODY WHILE IN THEIR SUBMARINE? AND HOW THE GROUP WAS ASTONISHED TO LEARN THE IDENTITY OF THE NOW REVIVED HERO, WHO WAS REASONABLY SHOCKED HIMSELF, BUT WHO TOOK UP THE COWL OF CAPTAIN AMERICA DESPITE THE MEMORY OF HIS TEENAGE PARTNER BUCKY'S DEATH MOMENTS BEFORE HE WAS PUT ON ICE? I THOUGHT SO....



THE GUY DIDN'T HAVE MUCH GOING AT THAT POINT, SO HE FIGURED, WHAT THE HECK, HE'D BECOME AN AVENGER! BUT NO SOONER THAN ISSUE 16 ROLLS AROUND, AND THOR, IRON MAN, GIANT MAN, AND THE WASP DECIDE THAT THEY DON'T WANT TO BE AVENGERS ANY MORE!

SO WHAT DO THEY DO? THEY UP AND STICK CAP WITH THREE SECOND STRINGERS: HAWKEYE, QUICKSILVER, AND THE SCARLET WITCH!! IT'S TO CAPTAIN AMERICA'S CREDIT THAT HE WON ANY BATTLES AT ALL ALONGSIDE THIS TEPID TRIO!

THIS QUARTET LASTED UNTIL ISSUE 28, WHEN GOLIATH (FORMERLY GIANT MAN) RETURNED TO THE LINEUP TO GIVE IT A LITTLE MORE POWER, AND AFTER THAT, YOU REALLY NEED A SCORE CARD! SUFFICE TO SAY, THOUGH, WHETHER THE AVENGERS ARE FIGHTING KANG, ULTRON, OR NELSON ROCKEFELLER, CHANCES ARE CAPTAIN AMERICA IS OUT FRONT, LEADING THE TROOPS! BECAUSE WHEN YOU GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT, YOU MIGHT JUST AS WELL CALL HIM CAPTAIN AVENGER!!

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WAR OF THE SUPERHEROES

By Roger Green

Over the course of the history of the genre, comic book creators have developed several formulas for making comics more interesting and hopefully, more saleable.

One of these is the inclusion of lots of "stars" in the story. This has been done most successfully in the *Fantastic Four Annual* #3 when Reed and Sue's marriage was witnessed by the Avengers, the X-Men, Dr. Doom, the Sub-Mariner and a plethora of other heroes and villains. More recently, the *Fantastic Four Roast*, celebrating the FF's 20th anniversary, included a like cadre of participants. The ultimate team-up book, however, is *Marvel Super Hero Contest of Champions*, the first issue of which contained virtually every living superhero in the Marvel Universe. Using a comic as a "star" vehicle in which the participants work *together* was started in DC's *Justice League of America*, later emulated by Marvel with the *Avengers*.

Another formula is the so-called epic, that is, a significant plotline which continues over several issues. Examples of these include the Galactus Trilogy (*FF* #48-50), the Kree-Skrull War (*Avengers* #89-97), and Black Queen/Dark Phoenix saga (*X-Men* #132-137).

Still another method, one most clearly designed to stimulate the sales of a less successful book (in most cases), is the crossover, which has a story commencing in once comic title and concluding in another. A couple examples are *Daredevil* #138/*Ghost Rider* #20 and *DD* #178/*Power Man* #77. Sometimes, the story starts in one title, continues in another, and ends in the next issue of the first, e.g. *Spider-Man* #39/*DD* #77/*S-M* #40.

One storyline managed to include all three of these elements: the Avengers/Defenders War. The story starts in *Avengers* #115, continues in *Defenders* #8, and alternates between the two titles through *Avengers* #118, with an epilogue in *Defenders* 11. There have been longer continued storylines, such as Michael/Korvac/Collector/Guardians of the Galaxy in *Avengers* #167-177 (exc. #169) and the Celestials Saga in *Thor* #283-301, but never before and never since has one tale continued in *two* comics for such a long period.

Part of what allowed this epic to come to fruition was that Steve Englehart was writing both books at the time. He was undoubtedly stimulated by the desire to create an exciting storyline, but perhaps he and his editor, Roy Thomas, were also interested in giving a boost to the fledgling *Defenders* title, which had had only a half dozen issues after its three-issue, Thomas-penned, tryout in *Marvel Feature*.

Despite the common writer and editor on the two titles, taking on such an enterprise might have been an overwhelming undertaking had Englehart not broken up the stories into chapters, with only a limited number of participants involved in each chapter except at the beginning and the end. This method was hardly new with Stainless Steve (as he was referred to on the Marvel Bullpen Bulletins page) as it was used to great effect in the All Winners Squad stories published by Timely, predecessor of Marvel. The group would start out together on a case, but then the Whizzer and Miss America (who were alleged to be the parents of the Avenger the Scarlet Witch and former Avenger Quicksilver), the original Human Torch (who, in a sense, later became both Wonder Man and the Vision), Captain America (an Avenger since issue #4) and the Sub-Mariner (one of the original Defenders) would discover elements of the plot in their individual chapters before they got together in the seventh chapter for the thrill-packed conclusion. The Torch was usually accompanied by Toro; Cap, by Bucky Barnes.

The Avengers/Defenders War was not the first battle between these two groups. In *Sub-Mariner* #35, a couple years before *Marvel Feature*, Namor, the Silver Surfer and the Hulk joined together to prevent a faulty nuclear weather-

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control station located in the Caribbean from blowing up. Their motives suspect, the available Avengers, Goliath, Iron Man and Thor (the others busy doing a charity TV spot) were called in. Subby and his allies were ultimately vindicated. This story, *Sub-Mariner #34*, with the same Titans Three and the conclusion of Dr. Strange's career in *Dr Strange #181/Sub-Mariner #22/Hulk #126*, all written by Roy Thomas, created the foundation for the Defenders title.

Here is, chapter-by-chapter, a brief synopsis of the Avengers/Defenders War All the *Avengers* issues were pencilled by Bob Brown, the *Defenders* by Sal Buscema. For other creative personnel on the *Avengers*, see the Avengers Checklist elsewhere in this issue.

Avengers #115: PROLOGUE—this tale gets started in a most peculiar fashion, in the last three pages of the issue, after the Avengers defeat some Troglodytes in the main story, relevant to the conflict only in that the castle which the Avengers attempted to breach in order to find the Black Knight had been sealed by Dr. Strange and the Knight taken was by "surface people in costumes," thus breeding suspicion toward the Master of the Mystic Arts. In the Prologue itself, Dormammu, longtime foe of Dr. Strange, rescues the blind Loki, evil half-brother of Thor, following his latest defeat in *Thor #207*. Dormammu confides his plan to get the Defenders to gather the six parts of the Evil Eye, thought to have been destroyed in *FF #54* in order to swallow the earth's dimension, making it ripe for his invasion without breaking a pledge made to Dr. Strange.

Defenders #8 (inks by Frank McLaughlin/lettering by Charlotte Jetter/coloring by Petra Goldberg): CHAPTER 1, *Deception* (4 pp.)—This also starts with another storyline, in this case the end of a battle with the Red Ghost. Then Dr. Strange contacts the soul of Dane Whitman, the Black Knight who had been turned to stone by the Enchantress' kiss a few issues earlier. Whitman responds that he cannot aid them in his rescue. The message is intercepted by the two villains, who cleverly alter it. The Defenders—Dr. Strange, the Hulk, Valkyrie, the Sub-Mariner, the Silver Surfer and recent Avengers dropout Hawkeye—pledge to find the Evil Eye, falsely believing that it will save the Knight.

Avengers #116:CHAPTER 2, *Betrayal* (10 pp.)—Angered by being repelled by a mystical force surrounding Dr. Strange's Greenwich Village sanctum and Wong's apparent insolence, Thor breaks down the door. Mantis fights the mage's man-servant. Some Avengers note the stone body of the Black Knight just before they are again cast out by one of Strange's spells.

Dr. Strange uses the Orb of Agamotto to learn the recent history of the Evil Eye, which had been stolen from Prester John by the Human Torch when the youth realized its power could destroy the Great Refuge and his love, Crystal. Johnny's friend, Wyatt Wingfoot, shot the weapon from his hand before it "detonated with the force of an atomic bomb." It was not destroyed, however, but split into six similar parts around the globe, curiously all in the Western Hemisphere and in the Pacific. Most of the Defenders depart for the six points.

Loki, now realizing Dormammu's unlimited potential, realizes that Asgard could also fall to his supposed ally. Thus, he reluctantly turns to his hated half-brother Thor. Momentarily considering telling the truth, he instead concocts a story involving the "evil" plans of the Defenders. Armed with their knowledge that the Surfer is trapped on this planet, that Hawkeye left their group in anger and previous suspicions of the others (they do not know that this Valkyrie is not the one they fought in *Avengers #83*), they believe Loki and head for the six points.

CHAPTER 3, *The Silver Surfer vs. the Vision and the Scarlet Witch* (9 pp.)—With this cover story, the hero against hero breakdowns begin. The Surfer reaches Rurutu in French Polynesia but cannot find the piece of the Evil Eye. He is mistaken by the natives as a god of the volcano, the one place he had not looked. Blasting through the hot lava, he accidentally triggered an eruption which shattered the passing Quinjet holding Wanda, the Scarlet Witch. The Vision, who had left the Quinjet seconds before to scout ahead, was not totally convinced by Loki's story, but seeing his wife injured and the Surfer exit the volcano angered him to battle. Their fight dislodged a part of the Evil Eye. The Vision could gain it but chooses to save Wanda, who is placed in the path of the hot lava by the natives. The Surfer claims the prize.

Defenders #9 (McLaughlin/Artie Simek/P. Goldberg): CHAPTER 4, *Divide and Conquer* (3 pp.)—The Silver Surfer returns to Dr. Strange, who had stayed behind to guard the Black Knight, and tells him of the Avengers' opposition to their acquisition of the eye. Again using the Orb, Doc discovers that the evil Loki's spirit had been at Avengers Mansion and the known criminal the Swordsman was now an Avenger. Doc warns his allies, as the Vision warns his.

CHAPTER 5, *The Invincible Iron Man vs. Hawkeye the Archer* (8 pp.-cover story)—Val drops off Hawkeye in Monterrey, Mexico, spurning his amourous advances. Iron Man flies by, stopping at the University, where the Eye was in the possession of Prof. Martin Figueras. Hawkeye snatches it with an arrow, the standard battle ensues. Iron Man ultimately gains the edge, but Hawkeye fires a magnetized arrow which yanked the Golden Avenger's arm so that his repulsor rays caved in a construction site. Ninety seconds later, Iron Man saves the building and the students around it, but Hawkeye disappears, too easily, into the woods with the second piece. This battle, incidentally, harkened back to earlier battles between the two when Hawkeye and the Black Widow were villains.

CHAPTER 6, *Dr. Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts vs. The Black Panther and Mantis* (8 pp.)—Though the Avengers were there first, Dr. Strange found the piece of the eye in a cornfield near Fort Wayne, Indiana. Mantis saw through his disguise of a local woman. Then, the mage flew away, only to be tackled by the agile Panther, jumping from a rooftop. Mantis saves the Panther (and Doc) from a shot fired by the resident farmer. She never gets to battle him, however, as he uses a spell to temporarily weaken them and leaves.

Avengers #117: *Holocaust* (2 pp.)—Dormammu discovers the Avengers fighting the Defenders; Loki professes ignorance.

CHAPTER 7, *The Swordsman vs. the Valkyrie* (8 pp.)—After a brief air encounter with the Swordswoman and her horse, Aragorn, the Swordsman enters a Nazi castle outside of Sucre, Bolivia, where an American met him. The Avenger enters and discovers the Defender. The castle owner locks a massive door. The combatants break through and discover a great deal of treasure plus the piece of the Eye. The Swordsman grabs it but is shot by the castle owner; in turn, the Valkyrie stabs the castle owner dead. She takes the fourth piece from her opponent's hand, saluting him for the good fight and not leaving until the ambulance takes him away.

CHAPTER 8, *Captain America vs. the Sub-Mariner* (9 pp.-cover story)—Namor had his piece of the eye as he looked upon the Osaka, Japan residents from atop a building as they chastized the Avenger as an American imperialist. The Defender challenged Cap to take the piece by force, which he attempted to do. During the struggle, Sunfire, a Japanese mutant who was later a "new" X-Men for a short time, took the piece for himself. Subby holds the Avenger over the ocean, but out of respect for their World War II years together, tells him the story of the Black Knight's fate, then pursues Sunfire. The piece falls into Cap's hands, but he didn't get far. Both eventually realize that their respective reasons for fighting are quite different and fly off together (Cap in his jet), with the Evil Eye in Namor's hands.

Defenders #10 (Frank Bolle/T. Orzechowski/P. Holdberg): CHAPTER 9, *The Incredible Hulk vs. The Mighty Thor* (10 pp.-cover story)—The green goliath finds the final piece of the Eye under the Los Angeles pavement. The Thunder God, arriving moments later, tries unsuccessfully to reason with him. A protracted struggle (over an hour in one pose!) was interrupted by the rest of the Avengers and Defenders.

CHAPTER 10, *United We Stand* (9 pp.)—An hour before the Hulk/Thor battle, Dr. Strange, the Surfer, Val, and Hawkeye are examining their four pieces when Namor arrives—with the Avengers! He tells his startled colleagues about the contradictions in their motives which led to a massive *tete-a-tete*. The confab ends quickly when they realize that two of their number are still fighting. Dr. Strange, who whisked them all to L.A., and Thor piece together the identities of their foes.

With all six pieces of the Evil Eye laid out, Asti, a servant of Dormammu, gathered them up. The people around them began turning into monsters; why the heroes did not may have been at the pleasure of Dormammu, who claimed the earth's dimension, merged with his own by the Eye.

Avengers #118: CHAPTER 11, *To the Death* (19 pp.)—Doc's argument with Cap over saving the people/monsters from themselves was solved when SHIELD arrived, though the Countess Valentina soon also victimized. The united superheroes head for the Dark Dimension, Dormammu's lair. The fiery villain imprisons his ertswhile ally; once he had the Evil Eye, he knew of Loki's perfidy. The Watcher appeared, but only to watch. The heroes defeat the lackeys but hadn't yet reached the Dreaded One, with only 20 minutes remaining before the dimensional takeover became irreversible, according to the astute Mantis

Meanwhile, the FF, Spider-Man, the Inhumans, Luke Cage, Ka-Zar, Zabu, Ghost Rider, the Man-Thing, Dr. Doom, Warlock, Thanos, and even Dracula do their best in maintaining order.

Dormammu robs the Defenders of their consciousness with a single wave of his hand. The Scarlet Witch, Thor and Iron Man escape the mire, but the others are caught, the Vision unable to turn weightless. The two most powerful Avengers are changed to their civilian forms, Dr. Don Blake and Tony Stark. Then the one of the fourteen who remains is caught in a rain of an adhesive solidifying around her. Loki, left unattended, attacks Dormammu. The weakened Scarlet Witch lets loose with a final bolt. The Eye sucks in the living Power of Dormammu and blasts it back into Loki's face, simultaneously curing his blindness and driving him mad. The insanity on earth's dimension ends, Thor takes charge of his half-brother, and Doc takes the Eye.

Defenders #11 (Bolle/Orzechowski/Roussos): CHAPTER 12, *A Dark and Stormy Knight* (19 pp.)—Dr. Strange repaired the damage done, erasing the memories of all but the Avengers and Defenders, and transported his group to his sanctum. Using the eye, he, in his astral form, seeks Dane Whitman, but the Black Knight is gone. Upon Doc's return, the Defenders find themselves in the 12th century with the knight in the midst of battle. The combined powers of the Surfer, Doc and even the Hulk fail to stop a gigantic earth spirit called Temax. Dr. Strange spirits his allies away.

The wicked mystic Modred had allied himself with King Richard's sinister brother, Prince John. In response, a spell by Merlin brough opposition in the form of the Knight, plucked from limbo with his ancestor living within, and of the magicks of Dr. Strange.

The Surfer, Valkyrie, Hawkeye and the Black Knight save the imprisoned King Richard but are defeated by giant gnomes. Meanwhile, the other three Defenders encounter John, Modred and a wizard conjuring more gnomes. Doc falls, but the Sub-mariner finds their vulnerability—water—and washes them away, thanks to a convenient oasis.

Prince John picks up the eye which Doc had dropped but is stopped by Prester John (last seen in *FF #54*), ally of King Richard.

Dane realizes that he is uncomfortable in the 20th century and decides to stay in the 12th. Prester John sends the Defenders back, using the Eye Hawkeye, Namor, the Silver Surfer, all depart from the non-team, leaving only Dr. Strange and the Valkyrie.

The beginning of *Avengers #119* shows the Avengers after the near-catastrophe with Loki, prior to their battle with the Collector.

Whew!

How does this epic, which is incidentally being reprised in this year's Avengers annual, stand up nearly nine years later? There were a couple flaws which were apparent at the time, such as the misleading cover of *Defenders #9*, which shows Hawkeye being rescued by Dr. Strange, Hulk and Namor. The mage appears only briefly and the latter not at all. Moreover, the quick elimination of all the Defenders in the final battle with Dormammu was disappointing.

Nevertheless, this series ranks as one of the more significant storylines in Marvel history. The writing was Englehart at his finest (excluding some of his Dr. Strange stories), not cluttered by a lot of subplots (though not totally bereft of them) which would have unduly confused the reader. He cleverly ties up a couple long running plot threads in the best Roy Thomas tradition and made it interesting rather than merely convoluted.

In closing, a personal aside: I started reading comics, almost all of them Marvels, in 1971, after about an eight year hiatus. I decided to collect only titles that I could own a complete run of without spending lots of money on expensive back issues. This eliminated collecting *Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four*, or the *Avengers*, for example. I did collect *Hero for Hire* (now *Power Man and Iron Fist*), *Master of Kung Fu, Marvel Team-Up* and the *Defenders*. When the Avengers-Defenders war came out, I was forced to buy the *Avengers* issues. A few months later, I had to buy *Spider-Man #123* because it contained a Luke Cage appearance. At this point, I recanted on my previous pledge, and I started buying several other Marvel titles, including the *Avengers*. I've been an obsessive Marvelite ever since; the marketing ploy worked, at least on me.

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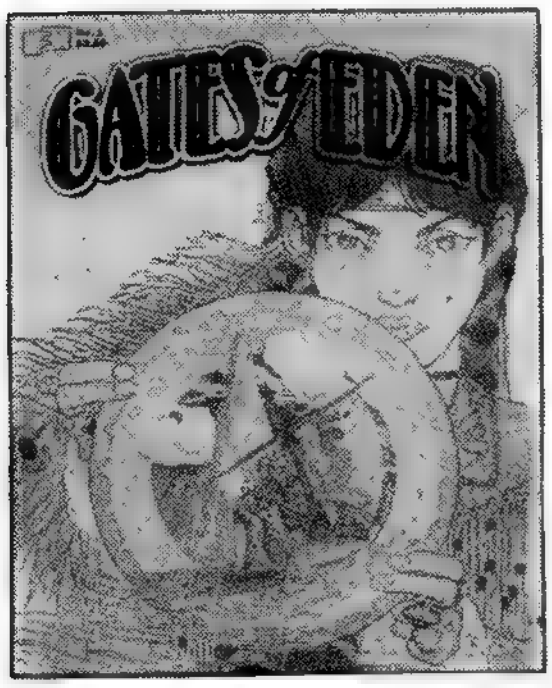

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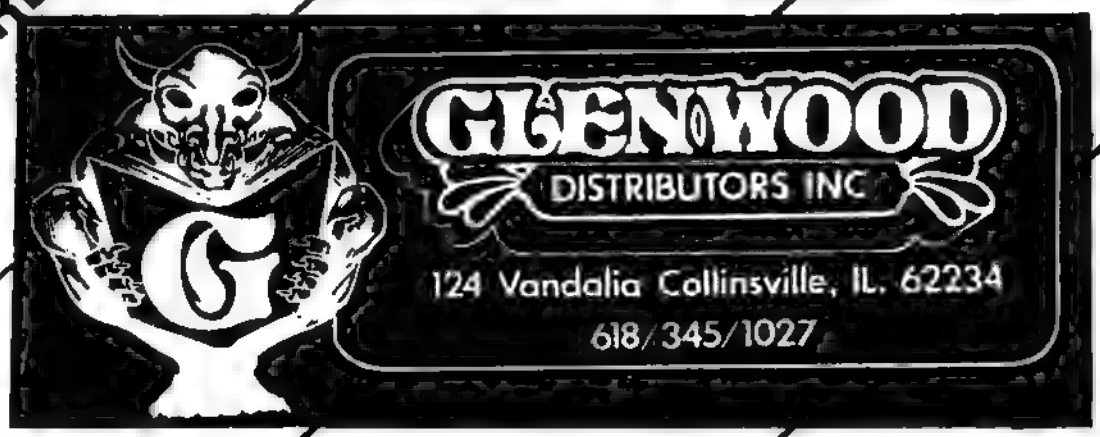

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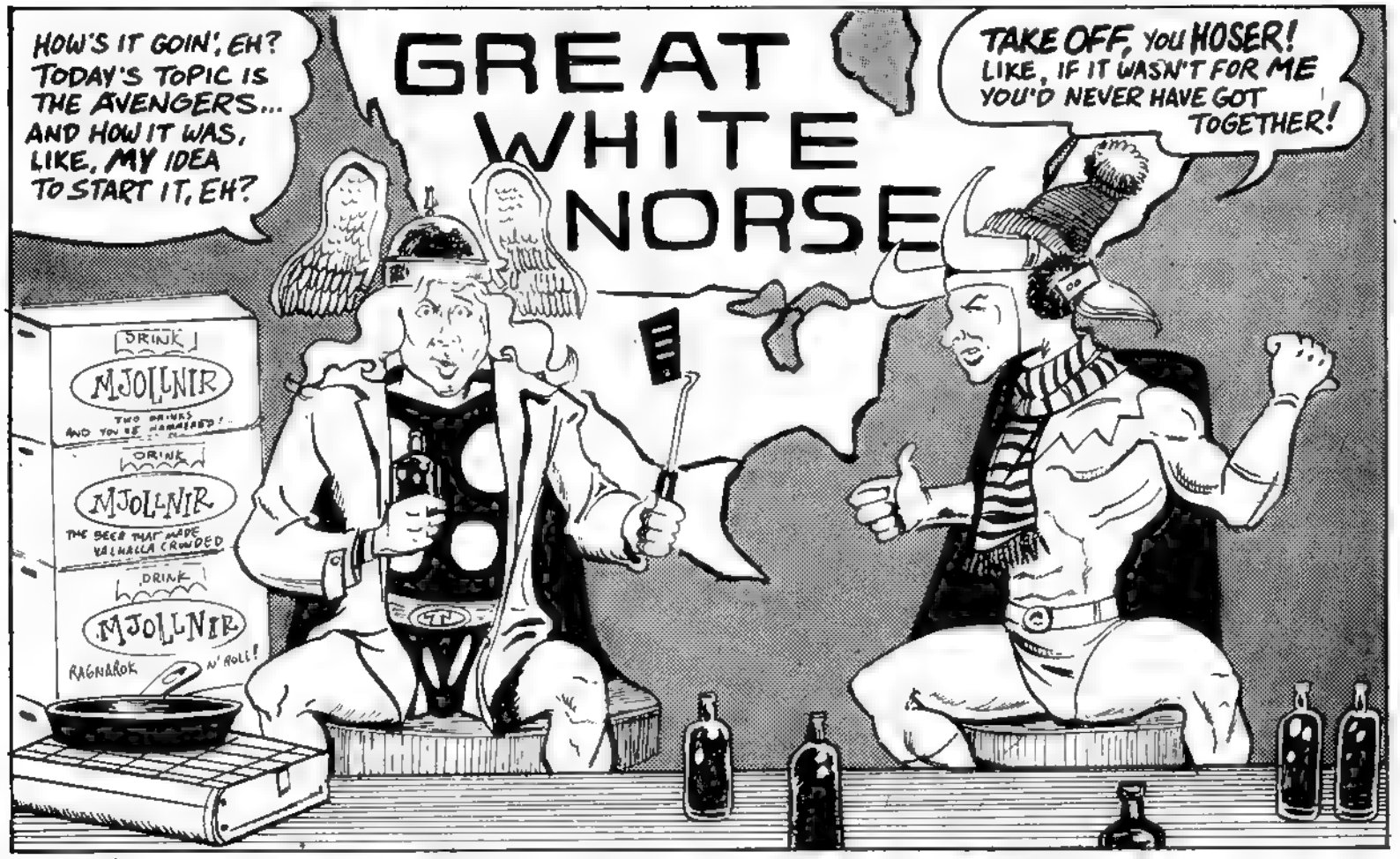
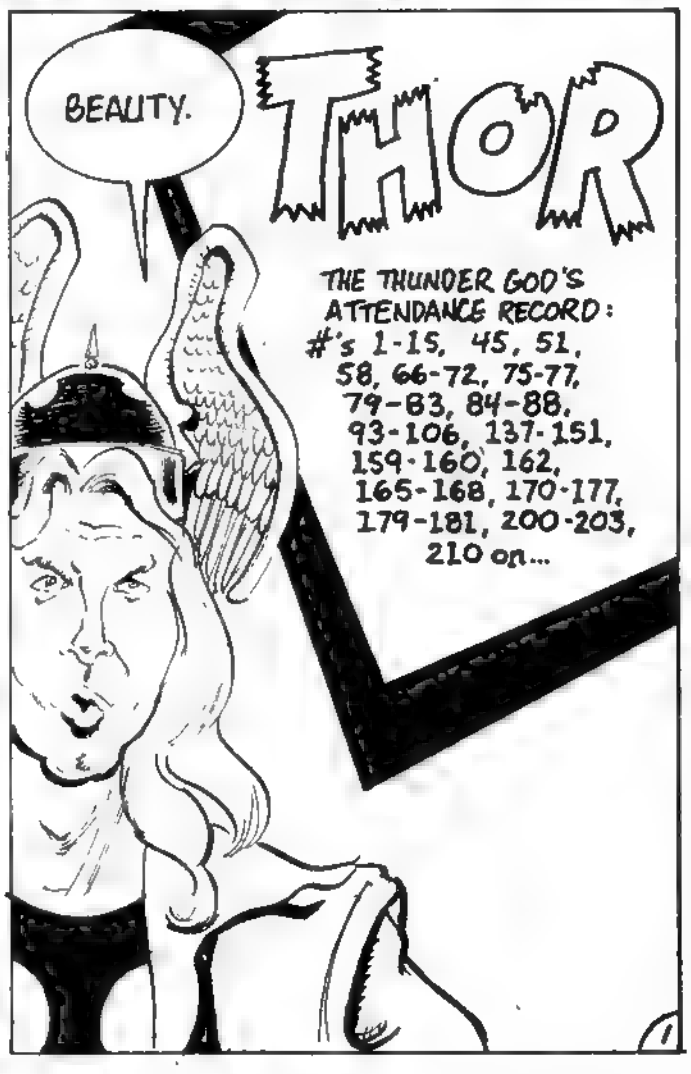

HOW'S IT GOIN', EH? TODAY'S TOPIC IS THE AVENGERS... AND HOW IT WAS, LIKE, MY IDEA TO START IT, EH?
TAKE OFF, YOU HOSER! LIKE, IF IT WASN'T FOR ME YOU'D NEVER HAVE GOT TOGETHER!
DRINK MJOLLNIR TWO DRINKS AND YOU'RE HAMMERED!
DRINK MJOLLNIR THE BEER THAT MADE VALHALLA CROWDED
DRINK MJOLLNIR RAGNAROK N' ROLL!

OH, BEAUTY, EH? YOU'RE TRYIN'A' HOG THE CREDIT, HOSEHEAD!
MY TOPIC WAS BETTER, EH. ABOUT THE PARKING SPACES IN VALHALLA...
OH, TAKE OFF! THAT'S SUCH A DUMB TOPIC!
O.K., THEN... THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY. GOOD DAY!



AVENGERS ASSEMBLY

JOEY CAVALIERI ARTWORK AND JOCULARITY • ROCCO NIGRO STATISTICS • MITCH COHN EDITOR

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AND WHO COULD FORGET IMMORTAL AVENGERS #4?

NICE OF NAMOR TO BRING THE ICE!

HANK: 1-16, 28-60, 63-75, 90, 91, 93-100, 137-141, 146, 150-162, 164-177, 179, 180, 195-202, 211-213
IRON MAN: 1-16, 45, 51, 58, 66-72, 75-77, 79-83, 86-88, 93-177, 179-185, 189 on
CAP: 4-39, 42-47, 56-58, 60, 69-73, 75-83, 88, 93-104, 106-121, 125, 126, 151-171, 174-177, 181 on
NAMOR: THE ONLY AVENGER WHO WAS NEVER AN AVENGER.

LIKE MY LATEST OUTFIT?

THE INSIGNIA STANDS FOR "WONDROUS WASP!"

I COULD DO WONDERS WITH YOU!

LIKE WHAT? TURN THE EMBLEM UPSIDE-DOWN FOR "MS. MARVEL?"

THANKS BUT NO THANKS!

AND WHAT DO I GET? HAND-ME-DOWNS!

JANET ~~VAN DYNE~~ PYM VAN DYNE: 1-16, 26, 28-60, 63-75, 83, 90, 91, 100, 137-140, 146, 150-162, 164-177, 179 on

MS. MARVEL: 183-200
HELLCAT: 144-151

FASHIONS COURTESY PATSY WALKER.

2

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THE AVENGERS HAVE NEVER BEEN TOO PARTICULAR ABOUT WHO THEY GIVE A MEMBERSHIP CARD TO. SO FAR, THE ROSTER'S INCLUDED RUSSIAN SPIES, SUPERVILLAINS, AND EVIL MUTANTS!

'TASHA: 111, 112, 163, 173-177, 181

CLINT: 16-88, 90-109, 130-137, 142-146, 172-177, 181, 183-185, 189, 198-204, 221 on

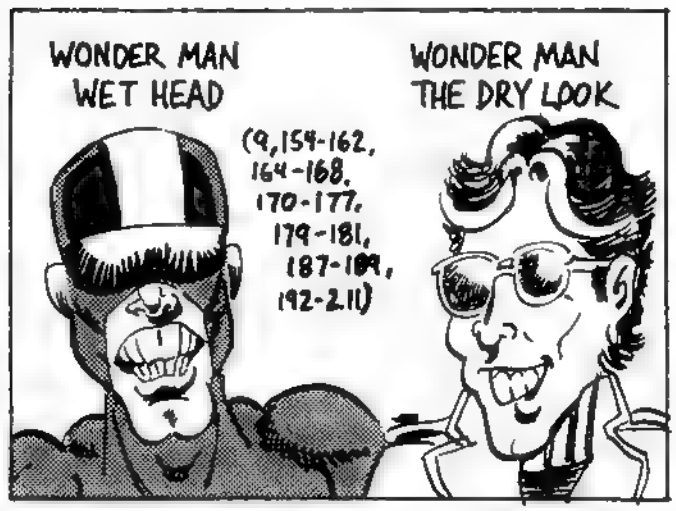
VIZH: 58-137, 140-162, 166-168, 170-172, 174-177, 179-211

WANDA: 16-30, 36-49, 75-130, 135-137, 140-162, 164-168, 170-177, 179-182, 185-192, 197-211

PIETRO: 16-30, 36-49 75-104, 105-110, 127, 174-177, 181, 182, 185-188

WAKANDA PLACE IS THIS?
WHADDAYA MEAN? WAKANDA NAME YA GOT FOR THIS JOINT?
THAT'S RIGHT!
YOU SAID IT!
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M TALKIN' ABOUT!

HANK: 137-168, 170-211
T'CHALLA: 52-66, 68-88, 100, 105-126



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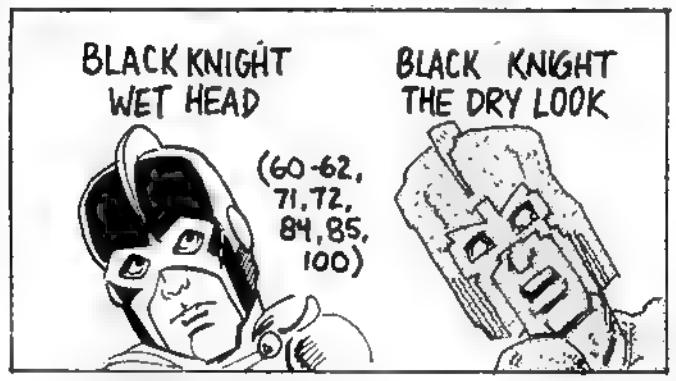

(60-62, 71, 72, 84, 85, 100)

(137-144, 147-151, 174-177, 181)

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FALCON: 181 (admitted), 184-194

JOCASTA: 196-211

AND DON'T FORGET ME --TINA!

SWORDSMAN: 19,20,100, 114 (rejoined)-GIANT SIZE 2 (died)

MANTIS: 114 (joined)-GIANT SIZE 4 (left)

HULK: 1,2,5,100

I KNOW! I KNOW! WE'RE THE SUPPORTING CAST!

GEEZ! THE M.M.M.S. HAD FEWER MEMBERS!

TEA?

TIGRA: 211-216

HERCULES: 45-50,99,100,163,173-177

WE'RE TALKIN' CLINKER CITY HERE, FOLKS!

4

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Paperback Avengers

By Lou Mougin

It was 1967 and, thanks to the Batman TV show, the entire country was, to one degree or another, aware that super-heroes were "in for a season. The American merchandising machine accordingly ground out posters, records, dolls, toys, costumes and other paraphenalia connected with comic book heroes. The lucky ones were licensed to use Batman in connection with their gimmicks. The others, what few there were, settled for Golden Age characters—particularly those in old-time comic strips—or current fare like the Marvel superheroes. Paperbacks were in the vanguard of this craze. Most of them were simply reprint books (Signet's *Batman* series, Tower's *THUNDER Agents*, Belmonts *High Camp Super Heroes* and the Lancer Marvel paperbacks). But there were a few original prose novels written about superheroes, and one of these, published by Bantam Books in June of 1967, was *The Avengers Battle the Earth-Wrecker*, by Otto Binder

The cover showed five stiffly-painted superstars spotlit against a black background. Goliath (Henry Pym at the time) loomed over the group from behind, menacingly Captain America stood directly in front of him, hefting his shield as if asked by the artist to pose. To Cap's left, Quicksilver stood, arms folded, with a slightly angry expression on his face. The Scarlet Witch in front of them, chin up and hands on hips, posed like a bathing-suit model. Only Hawkeye showed much animation, gritting his teeth angrily and fitting an arrow to his bow.

This was a pretty accurate depiction of the Avengers' membership between issues #28-30, so it came as a bit of a surprise when the reader found out that Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch *weren't* included in the story, and Iron Man, who hadn't been an active member for about two years, *was*

Binder, famed for his comics and SF work *(Captain Marvel, Adam Link)*, probably made the lineup change so as to utilize the Avengers with the most scientifically-based, and therefore plausible, powers. Of the five Assemblers in the book—Iron Man, Cap, Hawkeye, Goliath and the Wasp— only the last two had true "super-powers," and they were the result of lab work, not of finding a gnarled cane that changed into a hammer when stamped on the ground Binder was at pains throughout the story to minimize the "unbelievable" aspects of the heroes; for instance, the recap of the Wasp's origin totally omitted the alien creature from Kosmos. Thor, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch were mentioned as past members of the group, but the Hulk was completely ignored, and Binder didn't retell the tale of the encounter with Loki that resulted in the Avengers' formation. Presumably, Asgardian gods weren't as credible as a 10-foot man or a hero in mechanized flying armor.

Anyway, Binder proceeded to turn out an entertaining juvenile novel in 122 pages, pitting the Avengers against an obvious Kang-derivate villain called "Karzz the Conqueror." Karzz, a Vegan tyrant from the future, had taken "world after world among the stars," until the might of a future Earth had decimated his war machine. Accordingly, he had gone back to 1967 to destroy a less-advanced Terra and so ensure an alternate future without troublesome Earthlings in his path The story is laden with painstakingly accurate scientific detail, as in this scene where Iron Man is pulled into the influence of a gigantic magnet and tries to calculate its power

> "One billion gauss?" Even his thoughts babbled now. "Why, that's thousands of times stronger than any magnet ever produced in a research lab! That's enough magnetic pull to tow all the cars on earth after it, or to pull apart a skyscraper beam by beam. It could lift twenty-five ocean liners like the *Queen Mary* a hundred miles high into orbit. It could, if aimed at the moon, even begin to pull it out of orbit."

As it turns out, that's exactly what Karzz intends to do. But he's no piker. Simultaneously, utilizing android doubles of himself to do the actual work, Karzz activates doom-devices to melt the Antarctic, cause every volcano on earth to erupt, and incite catastrophic storms to wipe out what's left of the human race. The Avengers, in teams, try and fail to stop each machine. Finally, they track Karzz down to his subsea home base and try to bring him in, but the alien adversary simply hypnotizes Goliath into becoming his slave. Goliath, perhaps more powerful in this novel than in his comic book incarnation, proceeds to whale the tar out of Iron Man, Hawkeye and Captain America The heroes return for an all-out assault to avenge the death of their comrade, but before they can get down to business, the Wasp heroically flits in and blasts the hypnotic headband from Karzz's cranium. Goliath immediately recovers and takes "the Conqueror" in hand and threatens to squash him (no Avengers Code *here*, folks) until Iron Man points out that they need Karzz to undo his dooms. The Vegan proceeds to do this by reversing time, a la *Superman I*, to uncreate his death-machines. Afterwards, the good guys send the protesting Karzz through time into the 70th century of earth, where, presumably, he will be captured, tried and executed. "Karzz the Conquerer won't have a second chance to try to conquer time and change history," declared Iron Man, and that was that.

Binder put together an interesting compromise between comic book and juvenile thriller with some well-drawn action sequences, personality conflicts between Hawkeye and the Wasp, old-time Doc Smith-style intergalactic menace and Marvelish superheroics There were more than a few places where the novel fell down—for instance, having Karzz demonstrate his linguistic superiority by saying, "In Americanese, for instance, I dig how the cats talk. Crazy, man" But, all in all, it provides an hour or two of pleasant reading for a die-hard superhero fan.

Several Avengers made a walk-on appearance in Ted White's Captain America novel, *The Great Gold Steal*, in 1968. (In case you're curious, they were Iron Man, Thor, Giant-Man, the Wasp, Hawkeye, the Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver, plus good old Cap.) But, apparently, neither of these books did well enough for Bantam to continue the series. It took the run of Marvel TV series and specials in the late seventies—*The Incredible Hulk, Spider-Man, Dr Strange, Captain America*, et al.—to spark off another line of paperbacks, this time from Pocket Books under the overall title "The Marvel Novel Series."

The Avengers appeared in *The Marvel Superheroes* volume, the ninth in the series, published in September of 1979. Dave Cockrum's cover featured Iron Man, the Vision, the Wasp, Thor and Captain America charging into the fray alongside the Hulk, Daredevil and six of the X-Men. "This Evil Undying," Jim Shooter's Avengers short story, led out the first 53 pages of the book. Besides the five abovementioned members, the Scarlet Witch and Hawkeye filled out the roster in a foray against Ultron (which was adapted into comic form by David Michelinie in *Avengers* #201, 202). There was some suspense sustained as Iron Man discovered he was under the mental domination of Ultron, who used him to recreate his body and become his slave; Shellhead arranged for Thor to destroy him in such an eventuality. In between plotting and fight sequences, Shooter apparently amused himself with *Playboy*-style descriptions of the Wasp and the Scarlet Witch:

> She (Wanda) was tall, almost five feet ten, and devastatingly voluptuous; the kind of woman whose every movement evokes male fascination—a symphony of sensual curves. . . Her lips were dark and full. There was a softness in her features that bespoke compassion, and yet, somehow, disturbingly, the potential for coldness, even cruelty, was evident in her sea-green eyes,

After Iron Man does turn renegade and delivers the Witch to his robot master, the Avengers succeed in trapping Ultron inside a vat of solid adamantium. "And the threat of the Evil Undying passed once again. For now." So much for that.

The next Marvel Novel, #10, was a full-length Assemblers story by David Michelinie, "The Man Who Stole Tomorrow." Released just one month after the preceding book, it sported another Cockrum cover, with the Scarlet Witch, the Beast, the Vision, Quicksilver, Thor, Iron Man and Captain America drifting in the time-stream towards a gigantic face of Kang. It began with an interesting enough tag line—"No one noticed that the old man cast two shadows."

The "old man" proved to be an Eskimo named Aningan Kenojuak, whose second shadow was cast by an indwelling "spirit" called "Brother Bear." (This is going to get a little complex, so pay attention, crew.) "Brother Bear" materializes outside Kenojuak's body and proceeds to wallop the living daylights out of the seven Avengers. As it turns out, Kenojuak was one of the Eskimos who worshipped the frozen Captain America as a god in *Avengers* #4, and he wants his deity back, complete with frosty covering Thanks to the power of a mystic stone necklace, that's exactly what he gets, with Cap incased in ice once more. Still, the Eskimo "villain" has a second mission: to get revenge on the Sub-Mariner, who stole his "god." After a couple of battles in Alaska and Atlantis, the Avengers and Namor defuse the shaman's power, and he confesses that he received his stone necklace from a mysterious "Blue Totem." Said "Totem," of course is Kang the Conqueror.

Kang is not only hale and hearty in this story—he "died" in *Avengers* #143, but this may be a tale of *alternate* Avengers—but he's also quite insane, reverting to childhood a la Jim Shooter's portrayal of the Molecule Man. He doesn't seek to conquer this earth of 3900 A.D.—which has been transformed into a giant amusement park, complete with the Second Church of the Latter-Day Elvis and Fred & Ethel's Doze-An'-Shows Dream Shoppe. All he's done, more or less, is set up shop in a large headquarters with neon lights flashing "KANG" on and off, and hung out a shingle which reads, "The Conqueror Is In." Kang frees Cap from his icy prison and then, somewhat peevishly, engages the Avengers in a series of deathtraps. Eventually, the Beast turns the tide by transporting parts of Kang's body into seventeen different time periods, scattering his atoms throughout eternity a bit more graphically than in the ending to *Avengers* #143. (Shades of EC's "Foul Play!") The good guys return to their own time, with Captain America vowing to help Kenojuak adjust to reality

Altogether, the Michelinie book isn't half bad, though it isn't to be ranked with "professional" science fiction by any means. He keeps his tongue firmly implanted in cheek for most of the book, creates some interesting situations, and isn't afraid to have fun with the characters. Still, this book, like all the others in the Marvel Novel Series, is really designed for the reader with a thorough background in comics lit; anybody who comes to *The Man Who Stole Tomorrow* without having read several years worth of Marvel Comics will probably be hopelessly lost.

So much for the "paperbacked" Avengers. The three prose incarnations of Earth's Mightiest Heroes aren't classics, but they're fun, and a nice addition to the library of any Avengers completist.

INTRODUCING

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A Conversation With Steve Englehart

by Diana Schutz

Although Steve Englehart has not worked in mainstream comics since 1977, he needs little introduction. An extremely talented writer and genuinely friendly person, Steve has worked for both Marvel and DC, having written the gamut of super-heroes, from CAPTAIN AMERICA to DR. STRANGE to THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA. His classic run on DETECTIVE, with Marshal Rogers, fostered a highly-acclaimed writer/artist partnership that continues to this day. Steve recently had his first novel, *The Point Man*, published by Dell, and the book has already gone into its second printing. He has not, however, abandoned the field of comics, and his current work can be found in alternative publications, such as *Eclipse* and *Fantasy Illustrated*.

For four years, between 1972 and 1976, Steve scripted THE AVENGERS, sparking such memorable storylines as the Avengers/Defenders conflict, the Kang/Immortus trilogy, and the Celestial Madonna saga. Indeed, Steve's tenure on THE AVENGERS marks a high point in the title's history, and the stories remain as refreshing and alive today as they were a decade ago.

★ ★ ★

This interview was conducted on March 3rd, 1982, in Oakland, California. It was transcribed by Diana Schutz and Matthew Denn, edited by Diana Schutz, and copy-edited by Steve Englehart. Diana would like to thank Steve for trusting her with his mint set of AVENGERS so she could do her homework!

★ ★ ★

Diana Schutz: When you began writing THE AVENGERS, you were relatively new on staff at Marvel. How did you come to be chosen, at that time, to do one of their best-selling titles?

Steve Englehart: I don't know, other than it was Roy's (Thomas) decision. I remember I was a big Avengers fan and he knew that I was. I believe that when he offered me the book he said he knew that I was really into the book. But I don't think there was anything more *to* that. I didn't have much of a track record at that time, although they had liked what they'd seen from the brief track record that I had.

Diana: On AMAZING ADVENTURES and—

Steve: *The Beast*, THE DEFENDERS, and CAPTAIN AMERICA. I'm sure were about all I had done at that point.

Diana: You've mentioned in a previous interview (*The Comics Journal* #63, May '81) that you got more comfortable with THE AVENGERS after about the first year and a half.

Steve: Yeah.

Diana: Did that have something to do with your moving to California?

Steve: When you asked me this the other day, I said I didn't really think so, but I was thinking about CAPTAIN AMERICA and it falls into two distinct phases—I've always thought of it since as the super-hero phase and the more political phase. And *that* transition took place at the time of the trip to California. I think it wasn't so much *California*—it could have been Podunk, Iowa—but it was the sense of . . .When I was in New York I was part of the Bullpen. I had *really* been part of the Bullpen because I started out working in the offices. I was identified in my own mind, and I think in everybody else's mind, as a part of the group of Marvel people, and so my work in that period, before the stuff that would have started appearing at the beginning of 1974, had been primarily old-time Marvel-oriented, in a super-heroic context. When I moved to California, I was suddenly on my own and I was having people react to me on the basis of knowing my stuff but not me—they bought it in California without my being around, and they liked it, or they didn't like it, or whatever—but I was no longer in the womb, I was no longer living with people, working with people, being bought by people all of whom probably saw me on a fairly regular basis, at conventions and so forth. Certainly, because these new people were Californians, they had a particular California slant—no doubt a different slant from Iowa. But I think it was primarily not the fact that I *moved*, that *I* moved, or that fact that I went to a particular place, but the fact that the result of that was that my mind was encountering new situations. But it wasn't as simple as saying "California is political, therefore I became political—or cosmic. California is cosmic, therefore I did that." It was more just a difference in circumstances.

Diana: The first 15 or so issues of your AVENGERS tend to read a bit in the Stan Lee/Roy Thomas style of writing, and I wondered if being outside of their influence, geographically anyway, had something to do with the change in the series.

Steve: I think that's true. I think that's part of the whole picture. But as I've said many times before in other interviews, Roy's AVENGERS, to me, were one of the real high marks of Marvel. And so, when he gave me his AVENGERS—I mean, the book had gotten better and better and better,, and he left it at a plateau—I was trying to do Roy's AVENGERS. It took me a year and a half to figure out that I could do *my* AVENGERS better than I could do *his* AVENGERS. I was very happy with everything else that I was doing. I mean, I was doing THE DEFENDERS, which was a group book and also had been written by Roy, but he'd only done a couple of issues. I was doing CAPTAIN AMERICA which had been dead in the water for years and years. And *The Beast* (AMAZING ADVENTURES), and I think that DOC SAVAGE must have been in there and DR. STRANGE. Everything else I was doing at that time I was very happy with. THE AVENGERS I was never really happy with because *I* never felt that I was living up to the standards that I was setting for myself, and I couldn't figure out *how* to do it. There were sections, particularly the Avengers/Defenders crossover, that I was as happy with as anything I did. But, by and large, the stories were pretty funky. They were single issues, nothing villains—the Lion God and whoever else was in there—they weren't all that interesting. Mantis began in that period, and she was developing into something, but still it really wasn't until I said to myself, "You're treating the traditional mainline super-hero books with a traditional mainline super-hero approach, whereas the oddballs like DR. STRANGE, or even CAPTAIN AMERICA," which didn't really have any background since 1941, "these you're able to just do whatever you want to with, and you're much happier with them and so are the readers," that I made a conscious decision to stop trying to emulate previous AVENGERS and start trying to do my own. And that comes pretty much at issue #124, #126. Right at #124, and then #125 was a tie-in with Starlin's CAPTAIN MARVEL, and then #126 was where I first started rolling with the thing, and very quickly got into the Kang/Immortus trip. I took all these threads that I had wandering around, all the stuff that wasn't going anywhere, like Libra, Mantis' father—I was inventing things every month, but they weren't coherent, they weren't going anywhere—and I said "Let's make this '*the* super-hero book'." And so, my definition of doing that was to get more introspective, either to go more political with Captain America, more cosmic with Mantis, whatever it was—but there was a watershed where I finally said I felt good about it. I just mention also that I *was* doing THE AVENGERS and THE DEFENDERS, and I thought I was doing THE DEFENDERS really well. I really *liked* every issue of THE DEFENDERS, and that's why I gave *them* up when I decided that I needed to concentrate on *one* of them. I didn't want to do two group books, and I said I would rather give up the one that I was happy with already than the one that I wasn't doing too well on.

Diana: During your four years on the book, the Avengers' roster changed around a fair bit. Who were your personal favorite characters?

Steve: Well, I'm always interested in *characters* more than super-villains. I've said this in every interview—it's old news. But, I always thought of the character relationship I wanted to do that month and then I'd think of a villain—which is totally the reverse to other writers' approach to the thing. So I was interested in the characters who didn't appear anywhere else, i.e. Wanda and the Vision—the Black Panther when he was around, but he kept getting series. They were my personal favorites, and yet nearly everybody in the Avengers up until my time I liked. I wasn't supposed to do too much with Thor and Iron Man and Captain America, but I *liked* them, and as time wore on I started to play more with their camaraderie in the group.

Diana: Why couldn't you do more with the big three? Were you restricted by the fact that they had their own books?

Steve: Yeah, it was sort of an unspoken agreement with the writers of IRON MAN and THOR. Team books, unless they were more important than the individual character—there were some team books that had a bunch of second-rate characters and therefore the team book became important—but team books weren't supposed to screw up anybody else's continuity. And even when you *tried* to be good at keeping up continuity, even when you'd try to have Iron Man say, "Well, I just came back from fighting (somebody who'd been in his book that month)," even then, the guy who was writing the book might change his mind at the last minute. Your continuity would never quite work. It was always a lot of trouble. And, in fact, it always seemed a little mechanical to me. Even if you *said* that, THE AVENGERS had its own ongoing continuity, its own momentum, and its own writer who had a certain style to his characters—and IRON MAN or THOR would have different continuity, different writers. And so, if Iron Man would say "I just came back from fighting the Melter," or whatever, "in order to be at this meeting," in *my* head, those never really jived. Somehow, they were always like two different Iron Men. So, it was just easier to avoid that altogether, just to let them be the big three. Later, as that problem began to gnaw at me, I decided to get rid of them, if I could. And I had a specific reason with regard to Thor—I just really felt that

'I was trying to do Roy's Avengers. It took me a year and a half to figure out that I could do my Avengers better than I could do his Avengers.'

that Thor was so much more powerful than the rest of them that ditching Thor would make for a better group, and I still remember how favorably impressed I was with AVENGERS #16, when Stan ditched all the big *five* and brought in Hawkeye and Wanda and Quicksilver in the first place, going against all the

Diana Schutz works under the title of High Empress at the Berkeley Comics and Comix.

rules of the time and getting rid of all your major characters, then putting together a new group of second-rate people and letting them become first-rate people. So, over time, I tended to try and keep two of the big three at any given time, and then tried to cut that down even further. But I *liked* them, and even the people who came in later, like Yellowjacket and the Wasp—I always had a soft spot in my heart for them—the Beast, because he was basically mine (his personality at least; I hadn't done the first issue of his transformation). There was always a friendliness, I thought, about the group. People seize on various aspects of the Marvel continuity. They say, "Ah, the characters always fight amongst themselves." Well, you know, if they had a *reason* to, I thought so, but there are some sequences in some series where they just fight for the hell of it, because that's what Marvel comic books are supposed to be like. I always like the Avengers and I felt that they liked each other. They seemed not to have any deep-seated grudges against each other, and so I tended to go more for the camaraderie, the helping each other out, the kind word for each other, that sort of thing. Therefore, it's really difficult to say who I didn't like. There were people I brought in who didn't *work*, like Moondragon. I mean, I was able to do something with her, she was interesting and her whole trip vis-a-vis Thor and the Avengers was interesting, and yet, after I ditched Mantis, I thought well let's bring in Moondragon, and she never really quite fit in somehow. So I was happy to see her leave. Of course, the last thing I did on THE AVENGERS was the change-over of the membership for what I wanted to do next, and then I never did it, so it's hard to say where I would have gone with some of the characters. But I would say the bulk of my time on the strip was spent on the quadrangle, with Mantis and the Vision and the Swordsman and Wanda. And I really liked that whole four-sided relationship, so they would probably come out on top if there was a real hierarchy of who I liked and didn't like

Diana: To go back to something you mentioned earlier, you were writing CAPTAIN AMERICA while you were writing THE AVENGERS. Did you see Cap as two different individuals, given his two separate titles, or did you try to keep him basically the same character through the two books?

Steve: I tried to keep him basically the same character, and I think I succeeded, but he would do multi-part stories, and the Avengers would do multi-part stories, and there was no way really to justify the continuity. I mean, you would say that they happened consecutively, somehow. When he become the Nomad, I did a run through THE AVENGERS with him as the Nomad. It wasn't so much that there were two different people, but two versions, like an Earth-A and an Earth-B, although that's *too* drastic. He was the same guy, since I was writing him, he was the same consciousness in both books. But in one book, he would be vitally concerned about things that were quite personal to him and his partner, the Falcon, and his girlfried, Sharon Carter, and his situation, which, since I tended to stress continuity, usually would be running over six or eight issues in any given sub-plot. And meanwhile he'd be with the Avengers, involved in group concerns. The question, in fact, is probably more pertinent to Batman and THE JUSTICE LEAGUE in that I did both of them. The Batman that I did in DETECTIVE COMICS, to me, was a loner, and I never could quite understand how *that* Batman would be part of the Justice League, and yet in THE JUSTICE LEAGUE, I wrote him as Superman's pal with the same kind of camaraderie that I was talking about in the Avengers. And *that* worked; because those were like two separate traditions and I was able to do two separate books. Here, the tradition was that he was supposed to be the same guy, Captain America, and as I said, he talked the same and acted the same, but there's no real way he could have been involved in both ongoing series at the same time.

Diana: Was it your idea to introduce the Beast to the Avengers?

Steve: No, it was Roy's idea. When I wrapped up the whole Mantis thing and was thinking of starting up a new roster, it was Roy's suggestion that I bring in the Beast. I was happy to jump for it. I mean, I liked him and had always been sort of sad that he'd only run six issues. He was my first-born, you know, and he was where I really got to do Marvel comics for the first time, and I'd really liked that strip. I mean, it suffered—it was written by an unknown person at that time, it was drawn by Tom Sutton, whom some people really like and some people really don't like and who is not an automatic fan-favorite. It's one of those strips that I think, if I had done it after people knew who I was, it would have sold well enough to continue. Since it was my *first*, it didn't, and yet I had always thought that what I did in there was as good as anything I did.

Diana: It was critically well-received, at least in the letters column.

Steve: Yeah, well but I remember saying, in answer to one of those things in the letters column, that it seems to me—and I still think it's true—that you can either have a very few people passionately interested in something or you can have the masses—like, SUPERMAN being the other end of the extreme.

'Everybody buys Superman, and yet you don't find any people who are really fanatic about Superman—he's just sort of there, you know.'

Everybody buys SUPERMAN, and yet you don't find any people who are really *fanatic* about Superman—he's just sort of *there*, you know. It's always the off-the-wall strips, *War of the Worlds* (AMAZING ADVENTURES), BAT LASH, these things, that very few people really are buying, that are usually the most interesting. If you're lucky enough to trip onto them, you go crazy for them, but unless the thing can last long enough, you won't get enough people to keep it lasting. So, I was happy to bring the Beast in, and also—to go back to one of your earlier questions—there was Hawkeye, who had never quite caught fire with me. Hawkeye was always quitting the group because he wasn't good enough, and then a year later he'd come back again and they'd have a big homecoming, and then he'd quit the group because he wasn't good enough. But he was the guy who always made the jokes, and I felt the Beast could be funnier. I thought the Beast could be more off-the-wall, because the Beast was a product, in his second incarnation here, of my life in California. He could let himself go a lot more, and of course this *was* the mid-'70s, and I've never made any secret about the fact that I was smoking dope and so forth during that time. The Beast, under the Comics Code, could not come right out and say that, but he made it real clear, I thought, that he was reading Carlos Castaneda and listening to Stevie Wonder—you know; he was a young, intellectual guy who'd gotten hip, and I thought that that seemed plausible. So the Beast, to me, was much more of a '70s version. He was my attempt—and I only got to do him for a year before I got off the book—at the modern-day counterpart of the Rick Jones character, or the Snapper Carr character, the young, current guy, who in this case had some powers which Rick Jones never really did, and who was a '70s character, not a '60s teen-ager, like all the other teen-agers in comic books at that time. So, he did weird shit, you know, wore masks, climbed walls, and had blue fur. I liked him better than Hawkeye, and so I was happy to bring him in.

'I thought the Beast could be more off-the-wall, because the Beast was a product, in his second incarnation here, of my life in California.'

Diana: Well, Hawkeye was a bit of a whiner.

Steve: Yeah, and an even better *whiner* was the Swordsman, The Swordsman really had something to whine about, and went out in a burst of glory, whining! And was sort of noble about it. Whereas Hawkeye was always in the middle somehow. Hawkeye was never real good or real bad or real interesting. Of the group that Stan put together in issue #16, he was the one that never really grew into something like the others all did.

Diana: What about the Vision? He's been compared over and over to *Star Trek's* Mr. Spock, in the sense that they both are supremely logical and supposedly unfeeling. Yet, your Vision is hardly devoid of emotions.

Steve: Again, I would say that Roy invented this character, immediately set up the thing with Wanda, and played off that: Could an emotionless android really fall in love? And he had Quicksilver objecting to it, and so forth. And he carried that on, and it got to a sort of plateau. It's impossible to say, had Roy stayed on the strip, how he would have resolved it, or when. But it did seem to me, when I took it over, that that was a sub-plot which had started off really nicely, and then reached a plateau and stayed there. And I wanted to resolve that. I'm not happy with Aunt May having heart attacks every year but never dying. That may be the necessary commercial concept, and I'm sure most everybody in comics would probably say that it was. I would still take the concept and, if I were to get SPIDER-MAN, off her next issue and see where we went from there! (laughter) See what we could do, rather than stick with these things. That's always been my thing—let's not stagnate—and so, the first thing I did started off with Wanda and the Vision, when I took over THE AVENGERS. So, I took that and sort of added a second half to Roy's first half. But I can't claim to have invented who the Vision was or what kind of relationship he was in. I did see him as basically a human consciousness implanted in a synthetic mind, a synthetic brain, so that he basically *understood* emotions, and yet couldn't manifest them somehow, not as well as he'd like to. His mind was always ahead of his body. He could *know* he was in love with Wanda, but then he'd sort of watch himself trying to act it out, and it wouldn't work right, and so he was always questioning: "Is this really love? Can I really do this?" And yet, he did. I think the charm of Mr. Spock is that he doesn't have those problems. There have been, I think, a couple of episodes where Mr. Spock had his mind zapped and became human, but basically they kept him right where he ought to be. And I don't consider that stagnant—that's just a very sharply defined character who's not supposed to go anywhere. But, still, Nimoy puts a lot of empathy into that basically emotionless character. The Vision was more emotional that Mr. Spock—not *nearly* as emotional as the Red Tornado across town, who was another whiner! Since I generally take an optimistic view of life and generally like people to have happy endings if they *fight* for them—I really wanted to get Wanda and the Vision married, and see what would happen. What would it mean to be married?

Diana: Although you really never got much of a chance to explore that

Steve: Right, right. Again, it's been pointed out that it's rare, these days, for people to stay with strips for very long, but in those days, you know, you got the book, you were on it 'til you died! (laughter) Or, as it turned out, until you left the company, but at least if they gave you the book, you could foresee doing it as long as you wanted to. So, in all series, I certainly was always thinking three years down the road—not *specifically*, but, you know, where am I going to go with this. So, I was on my way to seeing what would happen to the Vision when he got married, when I left the company. He was an excellent character I'm sorry that they've dropped him from the roster now, insofar—and it isn't very far—that I follow what's going on in the current stuff.

Diana: Okay, on to the women. Prior to your stint on THE AVENGERS, the letter columns were full of demands to make the women something more than male-type heroes with a different body anatomy. Then later, after you'd been on the book a while, you were continually praised for having been able to do just that. I'm curious if you, as a man, find it more difficult writing women's characters than men's.

Steve: I really have to say that I didn't find much of a difference in the difficulty in writing it. I remember, early on, maybe even before I'd ever written anything, although that doesn't seem right, but very early on, there was a

science fiction convention in Philadelphia that Gerry Conway and I went to, and I remember we got back to New York and we were sitting around in a cafeteria in Manhattan at the end of the week-end, and we got into a discus-

'Hawkeye was never real good or real bad or real interesting.'

sion—his girlfriend was with us—about whether male writers could write women. And Gerry took the opinion that no, they couldn't, because they were men and they could never understand women, and they couldn't do this. And I said no, I though that anybody's mind can be understood with study, and if you were going to write a woman—or a black, or a chicano—all you had to do, I mean, *all* you had to do was to understand them! Now, you know, that's either a little or a lot, depending on how good you are at that. I don't know if I was writing *Luke Cage* (HERO FOR HIRE) at that time or not, but it was the same thing there. If I was going to write a black character, I ought to try and understand what a black character would think and talk like. I would have to say that my experience in life to that point had put me amongst a lot more women than blacks—just by the nature of their being 50% of the society versus 10% of the society. There's a female consciousness and a male consciousness, but I don't think I ever had much trouble really understanding the differences between them and what they involve. This was sort of pre-Liberation too, in a sense. I think there had probably been the first wave of change in consciousness, but it hadn't become a political thing in that having a woman be interested in marriage, or having a woman be soft and nurturing could get you in trouble for stereotyping and all this kind of stuff. I think I was through that gauntlet before it fully evolved. But it was never my intention either, and I think it's clear in the books, that women were *only* interested in nurturing and falling down. I've said before that, when I took the book over, one of the few pieces of advice that Roy gave me was that Wanda should never be too powerful. Wanda was supposed to be a second banana! And she should do her hex and she should fall down! That was as far as she should go.

Diana: And yet, you took it upon yourself to increase her powers when you had her study with Agatha Harkness.

Steve: Yeah. That was, again, right at the point where I said I'm going to stop doing Roy's Avengers and I'm going to start doing mine. Roy has certainly changed his opinion. His later women characters are much less like that. But—your basic question—I don't think I had any problem writing women as I understood them. I think '72 was still—it's hard to make distinctions, again—when I say it's pre-consciousness, I don't mean that all the women in the Marvel Universe, or the women that I was writing in 1972, were weak nothings. At the same time, the idea of taking Wanda and actually making her a full-fledged member of the Avengers, where she actually could have some power and some staying ability, I think the major blockage to that was Roy's injunction, more than society or my feelings or anything else. I was going to have to disregard what he'd said and turn her around.

Diana: Even though you were working under that injunction, Wanda *personally* came across as a very strong-willed character. And that tended to set up a bit of a dichotomy, given that her powers didn't initially reflect that at all.

'I really wanted to get Wanda and the Vision married, and see what would happen.'

Steve: Yeah. Well, this may come back to the discussion we had the other day, about your article on the underground comic *(After Shock)*. I grew up in the '60s, I went to college in the early '60s, I went into the army, I went into New York City society in 1970, and was writing this stuff in 1972. The distrust between men and women—I mean, there's always been a battle of the sexes—but the uncertainty about the role you're supposed to play and the role the other person's supposed to play, and who's using who for what political advantage, and all this kind of stuff, hadn't really become a part of it, and so what you saw for my women, for Wanda here, for Sharon Carter over in CAPTAIN AMERICA, was basically my concept of women at that point. They were strong, and they were intelligent, and as good as any man. That's the way I thought of women at the time, and the way I still basically consider them, which is why I had to ask *you* questions—is this really the way it works in 1980?! (laughter) And, to digress entirely from this thing, what you tell me is valuable because if I, in the future, want to write women who are in their twenties in the 1980s, I will keep that in mind—again, it's a learning process—there I just have to say "Well, this is how the battle of the sexes goes amongst people of that age at this time!' But those of us who are in our thirties now, and were in our twenties then, hadn't invented a lot of these problems yet! And yet, we were the '60s generation, so we weren't really working off the *old* problems. We weren't working off the old wife-and-mother stereotype. People had become much more equal—but, it's like if that was the *old* stereotype and this is the *new*, we were sort of in the middle. We'd worked our way out of a lot of things. People were very free, and this was the summer of love and free sex and all this routine. But we hadn't gone past that into recriminations and suspicion and so forth, which seems to be happening today. So, maybe I'm just lucky. Maybe I just happened to be here when women could be like this and nobody had to have any explanations for it.

Diana: With all your women, I notice that you weren't afraid to make them powerful without being strident liberationists. They could be on an equal footing with the rest of the group, but at the same time they could be feminine, loving, and nurturing. The perfect example is Mantis who, as I understand it, began as a hooker—

Steve: That was my original idea, yeah.

Diana: And later developed into the Celestial Madonna! You've mentioned that that storyline virtually wrote itself. I find that hard to believe because it's so incredibly complex

Steve: It is complex. But that's what I say, that for the first five or six appearances by her, even going into her whole history in Viet Nam, and her father being Libra, I didn't know what I was doing. It was more common than I think you might think to sort of launch yourself in a sub-plot without really knowing where you were going, just saying "This is interesting, let's see where we can go." What I find a lot is that there are comic book writers who do that, and never figure out where they're going to go, and then things just sort of die, you know, fade out, and nothing really happened and it didn't really matter. To me, it always mattered. It was always important what people were doing, so if I launched something, it's endemic in me that I'm going to tie it together at some point. You'd do this and you'd do that, and after a while you'd say "Well, this whole thing seems to be building to go in this direction, so let's go in this direction." Basically, Mantis was supposed to be a hooker who would join the Avengers and cause dissension amongst all the male members by coming on to each of them in turn. Once she got there, I never could make her do that. I liked her too much. She just somehow didn't seem like she would do that, even though she should have been able to do anything that I wanted her to do.

Diana: Although she did do that with regard to Wanda and the Vision.

'Basically, Mantis was supposed to be a hooker who would join the Avengers and cause dissension amongst all the male members by coming on to each of them in turn.'

Steve: Yeah, yeah, but not as far as doing that to everybody. And even more so, she was never as sleazy, as hard-hearted about it as she might have been. She actually *loved* the Vision, or thought she did. But as far as stridency goes, again, that's not really in my nature. People write from themselves, and the better a writer is, the better he can transcend himself, and do other types of characters. Well, Moondragon was fairly strident. I could do somebody like that. But I don't really want to get into what *other* people might have done—I'm always getting in trouble for making comparisons! (laughter) There are other writers who tend to write strident women. There are other writers who tend to write women who hold hands a lot. Everybody has his own concept of people that he sees, and my women just didn't do either one of those. I find women to be womanly, sensuous, exotic, beautiful, but at the same time, they're *people*, and I guess I always come in on the level of quality—people-ness. Mantis became more of a *mensch*—but Mantis couldn't just be a sleazy sexpot She had to be something *more* than that, and that shaped the whole situation. She is one of my all-time favorite characters. When I started her off, I was throwing everything together, Libra being her father, a member of a criminal group, and his whole history in Viet Nam, so when I started trying to pull things together, it made her have many facets to her character, in order to justify all that, in order to, at the end, say "See, it was all planned all the time!' When I was doing HERO FOR HIRE, I would work out these complex plots and I would send them to the artist on that strip, and he would send me back very simple pages, and he'd say "I didn't feel like drawing that" And I was young, and I was new, and I didn't have a lot of clout, and every month there would be this problem that Luke Cage was doing things that he would *never* do. I mean, I worked it out, based on who he was, as to what he would do—and he's not doing it! It didn't make sense. But it was incumbent on me, as the writer, to make you believe that it *did* make sense. And I learned a very valuable lesson at that point, which is that you can always get from point A to point B, even if it looks as if somebody's burned down *all* the bridges, and shot out all the tires, you can always get there somehow and make it sound as if you meant to go that way in the first place So that just comes back to what I was able to do with Mantis. It's like a maze. Here I am, here's where I need to go, and I've already set up all these blocks for myself, and yet I have to find some way to thread through that maze and come out the other side. There's only one way to do it—well, there are other ways to do it, you can walk out the side door, as I say,

'Wanda was supposed to be a second banana!'

where you don't even really finish off your sub-plots or they fall flat. But if you want to get to the end, if you can take the trouble to think it all the way through, then you come out with some story that nobody's ever seen before, because nobody ever had these problems to surmount.

Diana: When Mantis became the Celestial Madonna, did you, at the time, have any plans to bring her back?

Steve: No, she was basically gone. She had been the focal point of the series for several years by that time, and had been building and building. . .Everything is always organic for me. One reason I *didn't* want to plot things out too far in advance specifically was that I wanted to really go month by month, where each month I would have another month to think

about it, to pull things together, to draw off all the different experiences I'd had that month. So, by that time, I think I was interested in the Kang situation—not to say that I had dismissed Mantis thoroughly, but she was gone, she'd done her thing, and there had been an incredible climax to these two years of weird plot. We'd killed off the Swordsman in the meantime, and then he'd returned, and then he turned out to be a tree, and then I'd done those two issues of the Kree-Skrull War—I mean, it was really off-the-wall but I'd done it. Okay, she was gone. Then, I put in another year or so at Marvel, and went to DC, and right after that I went to the San Diego Con, and people were coming up and saying "Well, does this mean we'll never see Mantis again?" I knew she was popular—but you never *really* know, if you're honest with yourself. So I was surprised, frankly, when people came up and said "What about Mantis?" We want her to come back. We want to know more about her." So, fresh off the Marvel pond, feeling a lot of animosity toward those people and so forth, and feeling playful, and feeling organic as always, I decided to bring her back, in THE JUSTICE LEAGUE, complete with a disclaimer to the Atom and Aquaman: "I can't tell you who I am. If anybody knew I was back on earth, we'd be in big trouble!" And that went over well, and everybody knew who she was. There didn't seem to be anybody who didn't understand.

'..people came up and said "What about Mantis? We want her to come back." '

Diana: What was her name then?
Steve: Willow, when she came back. We were getting a lot of letters on THE JUSTICE LEAGUE at that point, the mail on the book had doubled, and doubled again, and everybody was really into this whole thing. Everybody knew who she was—except probably Julie Schwartz because he hadn't read the original stuff. But I had explained to him what I was doing, and he said "Okay, whatever you say!" (laughter) And Dick Dillin did a really nice job. I mean, he had to change her. She couldn't look the same, She had this little antenna when she came back. But she's still green, and she still talks exactly the same, and she gives her history, she says "Yeah, you know, I was here on earth, and I married this guy and we went out into the stars." So then I said, "Ah, people are interested in her." That was 1977 when I did that, and then in '80, when I was going to do the second and third parts to what had been a complete-in-itself one-part MADAME XANADU—which is a whole other story—I was playing off the first part of MADAME XANADU where this male and female god were trying to create, through the lovers that Madame Xanadu had saved from a fate worse than death, according to her—trying to create some evil child. That was at least the basis of the plot for the second two parts. And I thought to myself "Well, it's been three years since we last saw Mantis and *she* was supposed to be having a child," so there's a sequence—not a big one—in that thing where the Demon—and this is all in the story's previous incarnation—or actually Jason Blood, I think goes to an island in the South Pacific and meets her, and she says "Yes, my name is Willow, and the gods are trying to create this child in order to combat my child who is the force of good," and so on and so forth. Well, that story walked out of DC over to Eclipse, and so now she can't be Willow either. But that story *is* going to be done, by me and Marshall (Rogers), under the name of *Scorpio Rose,* which we have suitable rewritten and expanded. And, in fact, I had a better idea with what to do with Mantis during the course of this thing, so when this thing appears, they now go to visit a character whose name is "Laurel" who lives in Willimantic, Connecticut—which is a real town. By now, it's been so long that people may not give a damn at all about this green woman who talks strangely. If they don't then you'll never see her again. If they do, then she'll probably come back. And at this point, my organic solution is that I'll try to bring her back every time I do work for a different company, under a different name! (laughter) That's the story of Mantis. I thought, if people *are* interested, and if I were to continue to write comic books, even on a sporadic basis, for the next twenty years we could watch her child grow up, in three-year intervals! Just like the Eternal that's having this 50-year judgement. In twenty years, her child might grow up and take over the world! I don't know. The longest origin story in the history of man! (laughter)
Diana: Is her child male or female?
Steve: I haven't decided. We didn't see the child. She was very mysterious about this child. It does exist, she's gone through pregnancy—
Diana: Does she call it "this child"?
Steve: (laughs) I'd have to dig up the script and find out!
Diana: Okay. About Patsy Walker, I'd like to know what prompted you to resurrect her in AMAZING ADVENTURES before making her an Avenger. And when you transformed her into the Hellcat, was the irony intentional in taking the scatterbrained red-haired star of PATSY AND HEDY and giving her the costume of the original Cat, who *had* been a rather ardent liberationist?
Steve: Okay. There are no short answers in this interview! When I was a comic book collector, the dreaded scourge of comic book retail stores didn't exist! And therefore, when I was in college in Connecticut in the '60s, nearly every Saturday afternoon I would go up to Hartford and I'd hit the record stores and buy new Rolling Stones records or whatever was out, back when they cost $2.98, and then I would wander on through Hartford, and I'd go to a place that was a weightlifting studio, but the guy was also into comic books, and he was *the* comic book dealer in Hartford, or one of the three. And, next to great stacks of *Iron Man*—which is the name of a weight-lifting magazine, not the comic book—and *Strength and Health,* and all the rest of these things, he would always have another 300 comics every week. And they were a nickel each. And then I'd walk up the street to another place that was an old magazine store, and they would always have thousands of new books at a nickel each. And I would come home every week with a stack two feet high. And if I didn't have anything going that weekend—I went to an all men's school, sometimes we'd go away for the weekend, and sometimes we wouldn't—if it was one of these weekends, I'd get myself a couple of Cokes and a can of of peanuts, and I'd settle into bed on a Saturday night and just read comic books! It was "sensuous pleasure of a comic book kind!" So, I collected *everything.* I mean, you could collect everything. There was no reason not to—they were only a nickel each. So, by 1970, I had amassed a collection that included everything by every company from 1955 on. I mean, I had JIMMY OLSENs, LOIS LANEs, MAN FROM UNCLE, THE FLY—you name it, I had everything. And that included PATSY WALKER. Now, for people who don't know this, which is everybody—well, maybe all the girls knew this—but PATSY WALKER like MILLIE THE MODEL had just been silly Stan Lee adventures, three to an issue, and *then,* feeding off his success with continuity in probably 1966, Stan turned the two books, PATSY WALKER and PATSY AND HEDY, into continuing soap operas. They got very serious, the art got more straight, there was an ongoing story with continuity, just what I liked. So I've got that in my collection—just the same way that I collected *Twenty Miles to Heartbreak* in these soap operas that DC was running over in SECRET HEARTS and HEART THROBS. So, I had everything, I was a complete Marvel fan, I got to work at Marvel, I got my first strip, and I don't think there was anything more to it than just a random thought that Hank McCoy was working at a secret military base. Who did I know who was in the military who I could bring in? Well, why not bring in Buzz Baxter and Patsy Walker? Buzz had been in the air force when last we'd seen him. He'd had a very heart-rending story about being wounded and Patsy then being romanced back in the States while he was in Viet Nam, then he came home and he came off the plane on crutches. You know, they had an ongoing continuity to draw from. And, Roy had done it, brought back things from a long time ago out of the blue. It was a Marvel staple. So I decided to bring Patsy and Buzz in, and I came up with this storyline that involved one of my all-time favorite art directions. Again, after three or four issues, *The Beast* was not doing well, and I remember writing to Tom Sutton on the art directions: "Tom, we need to sell this book, how about a little sex and violence on the splash page!" (laughter) So, we invented this splash page where the Beast is falling in on Patsy Walker in her negligee! And I set up this whole thing where Patsy had learned who Hank McCoy was, and was going to do something about it, and the book got cancelled. And nothing happened. I finished off the storyline that was going with the Beast and the Mimic—that took place in THE HULK, because I was writing THE HULK. But Patsy Walker was left. Well, time goes by, and I was doing a sub-plot in *The*

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Avengers. There were a couple of issues where a woman comes to the Avengers' front door and says "I want to see the Beast, it's real important." Well, I mean, who could it be? There weren't that many people out of his life. And so Patsy Walker returns. Since the Beast is once more an ongoing character in my writing, he needs people to have sub-plots with. And, just as I was saying before, since he didn't have a strip anywhere else, he could now take up some of the slack that Wanda and the Vision and Mantis and Swords-

'...my organic solution is that I'll try to bring Mantis back every time I do work for a different company, under a different name!'

man had left off with the sub-plots in the book. Bring in Patsy Walker, and she's here to collect. She knows who he is, she wants super powers. And why? Because she went to Reed and Sue's wedding in *FF Annual #3*, so it's plausible, she'd always had this crush on Mr. Fantastic, she was the all-American scatterbrain, like you say. And she wanted to be somebody. Okay, well, why the Hellcat? Well, the "Hellcat" because the "Cat" wasn't strong enough—had to change the name. I really don't think that there was a real, conscious sense of irony in giving her the costume of old Greer whatever-her-name-was.

Diana: Nelson.

Steve: I really think it was much more mundane than that. With her red hair she looked good in a yellow costume. It was a super power that could be implanted into somebody, so you could *give* it to her.

Diana: Because the powers were mainly imbedded in the costume.

Steve: Yeah. I really don't think I gave much thought to how this was related to the political situation. For somebody who was doing Captain America as the Nomad at that time, I had several blind spots about politics. Again, I would say that it's one of those things where I wanted her in there in order to supplement Hank McCoy's life, then when I started her off, she had to do something, and so I thought of things for her to do. Again, it would have been something like Mantis, in that I didn't have a clear idea of exactly what I was going to do with her once she was in there, but it was one of those things where I threw out possibilities, and if I'd stayed on the book, she would have done something. I'm not letting people come and go for no particular reason. If I'd stayed with the book, her tutelage under Moondragon would have done something for both of them, and it would have been important to the series.

Diana: As it was, when she left with Moondragon, that was it. The next time she showed up again was in THE DEFENDERS.

Steve: Yeah, which I haven't read, though my impression is that she's more competent these days. See, but to me, she always was Patsy Walker, the all-American scatterbrain. Obviously, if she was going to hang around with the Avengers, she couldn't be a real dip. It would have been another "rising and advancing of the spirit." She would have had to become competent, and in *that* sense, I was thinking forwardly, in that this was a real old-time pre-Liberation woman who we were going to see turn herself into something. That much was definitely going to happen. But the specific thing you mentioned about particularly playing off the fact that the Cat had been a liberated heroine to start with, I don't think was a part of it. Again, you know, I'd gotten Thor out of there. I really convinced myself that Thor didn't belong in that strip—Moondragon's arguments sounded good to me—and when I changed the membership, right at the crunch point, I was trying to de-power them, trying to basically, with the Wasp and others, set up a group of a lot of yeasty people—

Diana: Yeasty?

Steve: People who would create ferment! Lots of people with energy and things to do who were not tied into other series, Yellowjacket and the Wasp. . .I can't remember now who I kept and who I got rid of, but the whole point was to expand it again. Some people think the universe will shrink, and some people think it won't, but in writing an ongoing series, you sort of start off with an idea and you build and you build to a climax, and then there's the post-epic letdown, but what you have to do is operate on the small scale for a while until it builds bigger and bigger, then you do the whole thing again. So I

'For somebody who was doing Captain America as the Nomad at that time, I had several blind spots about politics.'

was once more at that point of throwing out possibilities. Let's put *these* people together, whom we haven't seen for a while, and see what happens. I was real interested in doing the Wasp and Yellowjacket too. I'd always liked her. I liked her a lot better than I like him. In fact, I'd wanted to rescue *him*. I'd liked him back as Ant-Man, back in the real clean and naive days of Marvel. I'd liked him as Giant-Man, although his costume was always a bummer and he was always drawn by second-rate people, but he was okay. I liked their relationship. And then, Roy did that nice thing at the wedding where he turned into Yellowjacket, but basically, for a long time, he'd been working his way toward becoming another Swordsman. He was another guy who just never really quite knew what to do with himself. And yet *he* had a woman who loved him, whereas Mantis wasn't that for the Swordsman until the end. So I wanted to rehabilitate Yellowjacket. I really wanted to make him into somebody worthwhile, and of course that would have involved the relationship between Hank and Janet Pym. But none of that ever happened.

Diana: Next question—sparked by my two favorite issues in the run. You never wrote for any of Marvel's western titles. Is that what prompted you to send the Avengers back into the 1800s where they meet up with Kid Colt, Two-Gun Kid, and the rest?

Steve: There's two parts to that. One of them is that I was *supposed* to have written for Marvel westerns. When I was first getting my feet wet, I was given *The Beast*, THE DEFENDERS, and romance stories for Marvel—*and* THE RINGO KID. They were going to do a new series of RINGO KIDs, and they they cancelled it before it ever happened. But I had plotted the first one, I had worked out a Ringo Kid story, and the Ringo Kid was always one of my favorite Marvel people because he somehow had more character development. So I was fulfilling my fantasy of writing the Ringo Kid, and also, it was another thing of tying the Marvel Universe together. See, I believed in Marvel continuity. It's so difficult now, that it's become so tenuous, even though they still try to keep it together, there are so many different people, they're always having to correct what the last guy did, and so on and so forth. In those days, we were still on that expanding track, we hadn't reached the climax of 1976, and so it was getting bigger and bigger, but we were all coordinating it. And I though it would be nice to tie the western characters, another aspect of Marvel, back into things—exactly as I'd done with Patsy Walker. And, as with Patsy Walker, it wasn't just for shtick; I thought to myself "Let's bring one of them into the future and play with that." I don't know why it was the Two-Gun Kid—maybe because he was the only one with a secret identity. Another plotline that I never really got to do much with.

Diana: Did you have fun writing those issues?

'...in those days, you know, you got the book, you were on it 'til you died!'

Steve: Oh yeah. I had fun, but at the same time, it being all organic and all inter-connected, it was also, to my mind, part of the Kang trilogy. The *first* time Kang had come around was in GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS #2, one of *my* personal top five favorites. I just really like that story. Everything I wanted to do got done, which was nice. And I thought to myself, "Well, if the guy is a time traveller, he could go off for five years, come up with an entire new plan, set it all up, and come back thirty seconds—or *one* second—after he last left you." I thought that would be really interesting to do, so I *did* it. I brought him back a second time. I had that issue that I had fun with, *A Quiet Half Hour in Saigon*, where people are just sort of standing around talking, meanwhile he's amassing all these people and getting ready. So, I brought him back a second time. Then, nothing if not daring, I thought to myself, "Let's bring him back a *third* time! This can go on forever!" It's funny—at the time, there was a *lot* of negative reaction to that. After I did it, people were saying "This is too much. We don't want the same supervillain all the time." But in later years, I found more and more people who said, "Oh no, I really thought that was kind of neat. I liked that whole trip." But I felt, in the doing of it, that Kang had fallen short. Kang had a *really* good run the first time around, he had a *really* good run the second time around; his plot the third time around, his motivation—he was beginning to get stale on *me*. *I* didn't think the third part fulfilled the idea of growing each time. It wasn't bigger than the last two. So I was displeased with those issues on the *Kang* level, but as far as the *cowboy* level, yeah, I had a real good time. Because I always took the characters seriously—and I've read other things where people would do stuff like that and they treat it as a joke. Like people are always saying that Captain America always says idiotic things. He *was* patriotic, but he wasn't stupid and he didn't say cornball things, when I wrote him. When the cowboys came on here, they had to establish themselves as being the Marvel characters and so they had to say "Rannie," and they had to say this and that, but it was their ongoing reality. They were quite sincere about the whole thing, and I enjoyed writing them, and I really *did* like the cowboys meeting the gods. That was real nice, so on that level it worked, on the Kang level it didn't work. As far as what you're asking about, yeah, I had a good time.

Diana: I laughed and laughed. Those issues were hilarious.

Steve: Had you read them before, or was this the first time?

Diana: No, this was the first time. Okay, the list of artists that you worked with while you were writing THE AVENGERS reads like a game of musical chairs. Do you feel that the series suffered as a result?

Steve: Oh sure, because people get used to looking at character a certain way, and it's still true that art is the first thing you see then you pick up a book. To read a story you have to sit down and *read* it. To see the artwork you can flip through it. If a panel catches your eye, you buy the book and that's all you need to do. With the artist changing all the time, there were problems—I would say, again, from my personal development, because I do always try to grow upward—THE AVENGERS is the book that really forced me to say to myself, "If I'm going to sell this book, then it's got to be *me*. People have got to buy this book because they like *me:* the story." For better or for worse, anybody who became an editor at Marvel immediately tried to cop all the good people for his books, and those of us who weren't editors had to take what was left over. If you're in a position to supply yourself with the best people all the time, it makes your job that much easier to sell the book; if you're in a position where you have to make do with constantly changing artists, some of whom are good and some of whom aren't, if you're still going to sell the book you're going to have to start carrying it on your own—and I really would *credit* that, although I didn't appreciate it at the time, with making me someone who could then go out and write a successful novel. I learned to write with words and not rely on the pictures. I've said in other contexts that when I was trying to sell *The Point Man*, several editors said, "Well, the comic book writers just rely on

on the pictures. They don't have to be very good. Fortunately, as it turned out for me, that wasn't my case. I still remember, while doing the two-part thing where the talking stick tells them about the whole history of the Cotati, one day I was talking to Jim Starlin and I said, "Isn't this AVENGERS really neat?", and he said, "Well, you know, I don't really read it." "What do you mean, you don't read it?!" "Oh, I'm an artist and the art's so terrible I just can't look at it," and I said, "*Forget* the art! Just *read* it!" That was the first time I ever realized that there were people who wouldn't read the book if the art wasn't good. I'd really thought, well, if the storyline's good they'll go for it. I discovered that there were people who would *never* read it; but insofar as you could convince people to read it on the *basis* of the story, it forced me to do that. It stood me in good stead in the long run, and I think it stood me in good stead at the *time*. I couldn't swear this to be an accurate statement, but it seems to me that I was the first writer at Marvel to become a major "person" *without* benefit of John Buscema and Tom Palmer. There were a lot of people who were buying the book because I was writing it, not because Joe Shmoe and Fred Hack were doing the artwork. (laughter) But it *was* disconcerting to keep changing artists—because again, in addition to all the obvious things, you give one person a plot and they'll draw it all out in *four* panels a page, and if you're still thinking you're telling the same story, all of a sudden you've got *half* as many chances to tell your story. But it was beneficial to my career as a writer.

Diana: Of all the artists you worked with on the book, whom did you work best with?

Steve: I would have to look. I would say Bob Brown right off the bat. Bob was always one of my favorite people and artists, and he was already dying of leukemia during this point in time, but he never slacked off. He was always interested. Sal Buscema—a lot of people have taken the time to laud Sal Buscema, and he is very good at telling stories, which is important. Not as flashy as some people, but you'd give him a plot and you'd come back and there was your story and that was nice. Perez—I got Perez at the end. Another benefit of not being able to get the "good" people was that you got the *new* people, and I found that the new people, quite often, although they were new and maybe didn't draw as well as some of the "good" people, still had a lot of enthusiasm, and were *into* it as much as I was into it, and that was always appreciated. If Perez was a little shaky on his anatomy when he first started, he was still thinking and he was still into it, and would put that energy in there. There are very few people I would say that I really couldn't *stand* working with. There were various degrees of how much I *liked* working with people, and again, a lot of it probably depended on. . .This is my political answer. (laughter) I'm going out of my way *not* to offend people anymore. (laughter) I used to answer these questions in *total* honesty and then I'd alienate everybody (laughter), so for the record, Diana, probably it had something to do with my circumstances at the time, where I was in the middle of a story, as to what I thought about it when they'd call me up and say "Well, he's not working with you any more. This new guy's working with you."

'...I was the first writer at Marvel to become a major "person" without benefit of John Buscema and Tom Palmer.'

Diana: Okay. Right now Marvel's publishing THE AVENGERS, FANTASTIC FOUR, and THE DEFENDERS still, as well as THE MICRONAUTS and THE X-MEN, with a second X-Men book in the making, and of course THE NEW TEEN TITANS is DC's best-selling title. Given that you wrote THE AVENGERS *and* wrote THE DEFENDERS, for that matter—

Steve: And JUSTICE LEAGUE.

Diana: And JUSTICE LEAGUE. What do you think accounts for the current runaway success of team books?

Steve: I think there's an *eternal* answer to that, that at any given time group books will be popular because of the interplay between characters. In SPIDER-MAN, Spider-Man's fascination to me has always been his group, which is to say Spider-Man *and* Mary Jane *and* Gwen *and* Flash *and* Harry Osborn *and* Harry Osborn's father *and* Jonah Jameson *and* Robbie Robertson. If you've got a lot of characters that you know and like, then seeing them interact is interesting. More interesting than trying to just write one character, if that's all you're interested in. Now I have to immediately say if that one character is Batman, you know, if there's something else going on. . .But, group books—in order to move masses of people around, none of them gets to do a *whole* lot, and if they do, then the thing starts focusing on them, and the group becomes secondary. There's no way to get as deeply *into* a group, as a group, as you can get into Captain America or Batman or Daredevil. So in a sense, the group book has a sort of inbuilt aid to the writer, because the writer doesn't have to get that deep into people. He just has to keep them moving, and any panel's going to have several interesting people in it. There's also a secondary reason that people like—in addition to the personalities involved, which are sort of a function of how good the writer is—people like to see all their heroes together. If you like Batman and Superman, you'll like them better when they're together, and you'll like them even better when they've got Wonder Woman and the Flash and everybody in there too. The third thing as to why are they popular *now* is, I think—this may be half-baked—but it seems to me that it's a sort of a flip side to the punk generation syndrome in that people of that age group, people in their twenties and younger, don't have the clear cut view of the world that people who grew up earlier did. In the '50s it was *real* clear cut: us and the Commies! In the '60s it very quickly solidified into us and the establishment. In the mid-70s it was us and the Government, with Nixon and so forth. But, these days, there aren't really any heroes, nobody's sure what the future's going to bring, nobody's sure what tomorrow's going to bring, nobody's sure if their job's going to be here, nobody's sure if they can really be friendly with that girl over there because she might have some problem with that. . .there's so much uncertainty *now* that I think the fact that you can get a bunch of people who ostensibly like each other together to work as a team has more appeal than a single character does, because with a single character you've either got to buy him or not. This way, I think just the concept of "group," the concept of the Titans fighting together and liking each other and so forth, makes group books particularly popular now.

Diana: You're one of the few comic book writers to make the successful transition to writing novels. This goes back to some of what you said earlier, but was your comic background a help or a hindrance in this respect?

Steve: To me personally, it was a help because it was seven years of writing experience, and it was learning how to please an audience—learning what people liked. It was, clearly, learning how to please a *comic book* audience, which is not the *general* audience, but still, I had had my seven years of putting stuff out and getting feedback and finding out what went over and what didn't go over. . .sharpening my skills and so forth. Therefore, I went into the novel-writing business with experience, with proven talent, and with a lot of confidence that I could pull it off. It was a hindrance in that the people that I went to see didn't take me seriously, by and large, because I was a comic book writer; but again, because I had a lot of confidence and talent, I was able first of all to keep pushing, and second of all to finally get somebody to pay attention to what it was I was pushing. And then, in the *writing* of the novel, I had

'There are very few people I would say that I really couldn't stand working with.'

been made so gun-shy about comic books at this time that I totally stopped reading comic books so I wouldn't be contaminated by them, and had innumerable arguments with myself in writing the book: Should I do it this way, should I do it that way—on the idea that my instincts would tell me to go one way—but were those valid instincts for the new situation? Was I doing a comic book turn here? Is this too frivolous for a real novel? On the other hand, was I missing a bet at some good suspense? So I went up blind alleys, but again, considering that whole time from 1977 to 1981, four years, I felt as if I were leaping over a precipice. There were certainly any number of people from my past who wished heartily that I would fail, that I would collapse and not be able to pull this off. There was me, who wasn't always certain exactly what it was I was trying to accomplish, wasn't sure of myself at some points as to whether I should do this or I should do that. And I had no idea it was going to take this long. I didn't really know that the book business moved as slowly as it did. I didn't realize that it would take me three months to find an agent, it would take another four months to sell the book, it would take another 15 months after that to write it, that it would then take 16 months for them to publish it, and having gotten used to *that* schedule, I was astounded when it sold out in three weeks (laughs)! So I took my experience and extrapolated, and that didn't always work, because it was a different medium, a different publishing system, and so on. At the same time, while leaping over this precipice and going through all of these crises and so on and so forth, it was as if I'd landed about five times. I felt like I had reached the other side when I *sold* the book, because the odds are 15,000 to 1 against selling your first novel. Then I felt like I made it when I got the book written, then I felt like I'd made it when it was scheduled to come out, and then I felt like I'd made it *finally* when people bought it and liked it. It's very strange now—time shifts and reality warps and so on—now a great many people know what *The Point Man* is and know what Steven Englehart is as a prose writer. For *four* years, which is really more than *half* the time I spent writing comics—I was only in comics for *six*—for two-thirds of the time that I was writing three to four to five books a month for comics, there was *nothing*. I know what this book does, and based on my appraisal of what I finally did and my confidence in myself, I was able to say—although I didn't like to say it, because I still had no way of getting feedback—"This is good. It works. I did it!" But on and on and on and on and on and month after month after month nobody else knew how it was. And I *did* feel I finished it—that it was good, that it was what I had set out to do, and that it was *good*, that it was worth reading. And yet, I could have been wrong—people could have really said, "This is shit." So, now that it's all over with, now that the book is out—and really, again, 99% of the feedback that I've had on it has said, "Not only do we like it, but we like it a lot"—now people know what it is and I know that. I did it right and so on and so forth. So basically, I would say, since there was a happy ending to all this, that I found that experience was basically very helpful. If it had failed, it would have been because I really *wasn't* a novel writer, and therefore *everything* would have been different. We wouldn't even be having this conversation.

'...at any given time group books will be popular because of the interplay between characters.'

Diana: No, that's not true! (laughter)

Steve: So, finally, I guess, in landing on the other side of this precipice altogether, I now know what works and what doesn't work. And I now have a very clear distinction—I now understand both fields. Before, I was taking my concept of comic book writing for an audience and saying "Okay, put it through the Cuisinart, and now I will extrapolate into what I'm going to do for the audience that is out there in the book business." Now that I've done that, it's very clear to me—I mean, I had experience in both fields—so now I no longer fear being contaminated by comics. That's why I was able to go back and do *Coyote* and *The Djinn* and this sort of thing, because I can still sit down and *know* that I can write good comic books that people like and it's *not* going

to fuck up my novel writing. And I also know what novel writing is, and I can sit down and do the second book, and not feel that my sojourn back to comics has adversely affected me.

Diana: With regard to the second novel that you're now working on, do you want to tell us something about it?

Steve: No.

Diana: No?!?! {laughter}

Steve: Not for publication. I really don't like to talk about stuff as it's happening. It's sold, though. That much I can say.

Diana: Alright. But despite your novel writing, you haven't given up graphic storytelling entirely. .

Steve: No. At this point I have *done* the material— the *Coyote* and the *Sundance* and the *Scorpio Rose* strips—

Diana: All with Marshall {Rogers}?

Steve: Yes. I've found that I can still do comics. I find that it doesn't, in fact, destroy my ability to do anything else—now that I've done something else, I've nailed that down. And I still love comics. I always did love comics. That was the whole point of the whole thing. I didn't like what the industry became—the way the industry changed. But comics *per se,* or the way the industry used to be, I really like. Therefore, people who are willing to treat the creator as a creative person get my vote, and so, during the past year, I have done *Coyote, Scorpio Rose, Sundancer, The Djinn,* and *Roulette.* And I would expect that I will do more work as time permits. I consider myself primarily a novelist. Given the choice between novels and comics, I'll take novels. But novels do have, as I've said for several years now, a lot of dead periods—attenuated times when you're just *waiting* for something to happen, or you've done something and you're waiting for them to put it out, as was the case this past year. And given the choice between sitting around doing nothing or doing *something* that I still enjoy, in a way that I enjoy doing it, for money, option, etc. . .So I would kind of think that there will be comics appearing from me around, depending on the circumstances—my need at the time and people's ability to provide it.

'...I was supposed to have written for Marvel westerns.'

Diana: To go back now to your run on THE AVENGERS, there's been a lot of publicity about the politics of the Thomas/Conway/Englehart affair. Without rehashing any old feuds, were these differences in opinion ultimately responsible for your leaving THE AVENGERS in particular, as well as Marvel, or had you already started losing interest in the book? I ask because I noticed that in the last year there were several fill-in and reprint issues.

Steve: The fill-ins and reprints had nothing to do with me. I never made a book go off schedule until the 150th issue, which I was halfway through when I quit Marvel. Basically, they had had the stuff around, like the two-part Tony Isabella thing and so forth, and just wanted to put it in there. They just wanted to get ahead on the schedule. For the last year before I quit, they had been in the process of making the transition from what they *had* been to what they would become. All we knew, and I say "we" meaning Steve Gerber, Jim Starlin—those of us who were sort of out there in front—was we were getting more flak. Things were tightening up. We were having to fight guerilla wars in order to *do* what we had been doing freely the year before, not to mention the four years before. We were finding that we were enjoying what we were doing *less,* and none of us was really interested in compromising, because we had earned our wings. We had started out as unknowns, all of us pretty much at the same time: '71. There was this whole crew of people—Wrightson, Smith, Brunner. . .you name it. There were a lot of us who had come in pretty much at the same time, had worked our way up, had become the leaders in the in-

'But, these days, there aren't really any heroes...'

dustry, and all of a sudden, faceless people and newer people were making these decisions that ran counter to the Marvel that *we* thought had been established and that we were continuing to have a voice in. And so there was a phase where we would say, "Well, you guys are wrong. Yes, you're making this decision, and you *are* an associate editor, but we've been here longer and this is the way things are done." We found that people didn't appreciate hearing that. And it became more frequent, and it became more—sort of like martial law, establishing martial law or something—it became more. . "brutal" is too heavy a word, but *inflexible.* More and more things where they'd say "You can't do this." We'd say, "Well, we've done it for four years." "Well, you can't do it any more because we're worried about merchandising." Well, that makes sense, but we only got to where they could merchandise because we were doing the stuff. Well, people were having to *scramble* more, and you *see* it. I think you see it in *my* work, in that some of the enthusiasm waned. I would say, toward the end, even with Perez, and even with the Hellcat, and all this stuff that I was continuing to do, the stuff wasn't as complex as it had been. There were *psychic* limitations, and there was feeling that. . .Well, after I left I read a story that Alan Ladd Jr., who was the head of 20th Century Fox or something, and had been responsible for *Star Wars* and a few other *extremely* popular movies, left and went off to form his own company, and they asked him, "Well, why did you do this? You were extraodinarily successful." And he said, "Yes, but nobody from the parent company ever called me up and said 'Thanks. Job well done, Al.' They just assumed it was going to happen and nobody ever made that personal contact." Well, that's what *we* were feeling, and that's particularly what I felt. It's like—I'd established myself, I'd sold all these books for them. Why were they hassling me instead of saying, "Good job, Steve!"? And if they *were* hassling me, why would I want to knock myself out for Marvel? But still, I had never intended to *leave* Marvel. It was getting worse all the time, there was no light at the end of the tunnel, but it was

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still. . .I'd never intended to go anywhere else or to do anything else. I was a Marvel Comics writer, and I had my strips. But then, these things like—they stuck in these two reprints. When I took over SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP, they told me that I would start with issue #4, and so I plotted the story directly where #3 left off and sent it in and did all my work, and #4came out and it was by Jim Shooter. It wasn't even mine. They hadn't even *told* me. They said, "Well, you know, we just though we'd get ahead." Well, that was the whole thing: "We'll just stick two issues in your AVENGERS continuity." And as you'll notice, I totally ignored it. {laughter} #147 is right where #144 ended. But, that was about all you could do was ignore it. You could just pretend that they didn't exist, only they did exist. And the final straw was they put Conway in as an editor and the rest is history.

Diana: In a previous interview {*Comics Coast to Coast* #1, Jan. '82}, you unconditionally stated that you would not go back to Marvel. Given the new royalties plan, would you be tempted to reconsider that decision?

Steve: Yeah, but not so much the royalties plan. More the fact that. . .Well, I would have to say that I don't really fully understand the way Marvel operates these days—this whole *new* system. As I say, in a sense of all of us who left in '76 went on strike, withheld our services because we wanted certain things, and now nearly *all* of those things seem to be available, but not all of them. It's not so much the royalty thing as the fact that Marvel has various non-work-for-hire possibilities. When I wrote my novel, I got a contract that says I own this property, I get royalties off of it, Dell buys the first North American printing rights, and that's it. Foreign sales are mine, future printings are mine, merchandising is mine. When I then was approached by Eclipse and New Media to do work for them, and they said they were going to pretty much match that, I said, "Well, let's match that *real* much," and so the contracts I have with them say the stuff is mine, I get royalties off of it, they have the first North American printing rights, and I gave them 25% of the merchandising, because they have ongoing contacts that I don't really have, and I figured they deserve *something.* I think 25% is about right. From what I understand, some of things that are available at Marvel today incorporate those features. I'm not particularly interested in taking any less than that. Having spent four years hanging over the abyss in order to get to the other side, I know how much it's worth and I know how much *I'm* worth. So even with the royalty situation, it's unlikely, as I understand the situation at this time, that I would do any work-for-hire type thing for Marvel. But, insofar as Marvel approximates what I've been getting from Eclipse and New Media, then, yes, they're an equal bidder.

Diana: Thank you, Steve Englehart.

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ALTERNATE AVENGERS

by Lou Mougin

On one earth, Giant-Man, the Wasp and Rick Jones wore multi-colored armor to a cataclysmic battle with the Hulk and Sub-Mariner.

On another, six Avengers rode side-by-side with Thor in Asgard, doing battle against the armies of Odin.

On yet another, the Avengers were formed in the 1950's, before any Marvel Age heroes had yet come into being.

On a fourth, the original Avengers conquered the world for the Scarlet Centurion.

On a fifth, they helped destroy the universe

This is just a sampling of the "alternate realities" showcased bi-monthly in *What If?*, Marvel's showcase title showing how canonical Marvel "reality" would be changed if things had gone just a tad differently. Though Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four outpoint the Assemblers on a basis of appearances, the latter manages to turn up almost every other issue in some form or another. Very few have been top-ranking material, but they've come up with a few interesting hypotheses from time to time.

What If? #2 (1977) was titled, "What If the Hulk Had Always Had Bruce Banner's Brain?" Well, for one thing, the Avengers would never have been formed. As the Hulk leaps across that famed railroad trestle, the Loki of this alternate earth creates the image of TNT on the tracks, just as his counterpart did in 1963. However, this Hulk isn't given to rash impulse. Instead of hurtling into the tracks and smashing them, he makes a soft landing and carefully reaches for the dynamite. Disgusted, Loki dissipates the image

"Unknowingly, the Hulk has refrained from taking the step which, in another time continuum, would have brought him into combat against not only the mighty Thor—but also Ant-Man, the Wasp, and the invincible Iron Man," explains the Watcher, the narrator of the series. "Thus, there shall still be crimes worth avenging on this earth—but there shall be no Avengers!"

The very next issue, however, spolighted Earth's Mightiest Heroes center-stage. On the cover, the Hulk and Sub-Mariner leaped towards an embattled Iron Man as Giant-Man, the Wasp, and Thor appathetically walked off. The title was "What If. . .The Avengers Had Never Been?" It was more than a little misleading, as the story made clear: a new team of Avengers rose from the ashes of the old group (to borrow a metaphor from the X-Men). The divergence this time was from *Avengers* #3, as reported in an excellently drawn story by Jim Shooter, Gil Kane and Klaus Janson. Just after the Hulk's departure from the Avengers, Thor decides to cut out as well and returns to Asgard, presumably leaving Don Blake's medical practice to go to seed. Giant-Man and the Wasp desert Iron Man, who attempts to quell a Hulk rampage himself with as much chance as a snowball in Gehenna. Accordingly, he builds suits of armor for Rick Jones, Giant-Man and the Wasp, then flits off to answer the challenge of Sub-Mariner and the Hulk, again paralleling *Avengers* #3. Sub-Mariner severely damages the Golden Avenger's armor, but a Hulk attact nearly destroys Giant-Man. Iron Man heroically pours all his power into his friend's armor. The three remaining heroes are able to drive off their opponents, but only at the cost of Iron Man's life.

In *What If?* #9 (1978), the Kirby/Sinnott cover depicts Captain America, Iron Man, and Thor looking towards a quintet of 1950's heroes, specifically Venus, Marvel Boy, the 3-D Man and the unfamiliar Gorilla-Man and Human Robot. The story, by Don Glut, Alan Kupperberg and Bill Black, was "What If. . .The Avengers Had Been Formed During the 1950's?" Iron Man summoned the Beast, Captain America, Thor and the Vision to witness a series of events that occurred on a parallel earth in the late 1950's. President Eisenhower got kidnapped by the Yellow Claw and the aforementioned heroes, together with Jimmy Woo, banded together to save him. They did so, after facing down a team of Fifties villains, but the president asked the team of newly-named Avengers to disband "Our very existence suggests the possibility of space travel—robot warfare—men turned into monsters—and all-powerful demi-gods living on the fringes of man's world. Earth isn't ready for those possibilities just yet—and we might cause a public panic" This line of reasoning seems a little wanting, especially considering the existence of superheroes in the 1940's, but the Avengers of the Grease Age nevertheless disbanded.

Issue #10 answered the query, "What If Jane Foster Had Found the Hammer of Thor?" As it turned out, she became a superheroine named Thordis. She was shown in one panel teamed with Iron Man, Captain America, the Wasp and Giant-Man. "I like these Avengers!" mused the thunder-goddess. "They don't get intimidated by my powers. . .especially considering I'm a woman!"

Two issues later, we got to find out "What If Rick Jones Had Become the Hulk?" For one thing, he'd be big, powerful and have greased-down hair. Loki does his dynamite-on-the-tracks number again, the Rick-Hulk runs afoul of Thor, Iron Man, Ant-Man and the Wasp, and then all decide to band together. "So Ant-Man wants to make us a combo, huh?" grunts the teenage titan "Then Hulk will join the gang. Hulk needs a place to hang out!" Later, though, he is about to leave the group: "Hulk joined this gang to punch out bad guys. . .not to have Avengers jam with Hulk!" At that point, Bruce Banner nails him with a gamma-ray bombardment that turns him back into Rick Jones again, and the series goes off on a tangent

In #19 (1980) the Avengers (specifically, Giant-Man, the Wasp, Iron Man, Thor and Captain America—the scripters had a real love for the original team) appear for one panel as Peter Parker, now a big businessman, signs them up for a public relations deal. But in #20, it was back to conventional heroics as The Watcher posed the problem, "What if the Avengers Had Fought the Kree-Skrull War Without Rick Jones?" In this tale, Ronan decided to kill Rick Jones, removing the Supreme Intelligence's chance to use him as a doomsday weapon Thus, to save the earth, every superhero on the planet answers the clarion call and wings it into space to do battle with the Skrull and Kree fleets. Finally, the Supreme Intelligence merges with the dead body of Rick Jones to emerge as a "starchild," and destroyed Ronan, after which he calls back the Kree armada. In the meanwhile, the Scarlet Witch accidentally destroys the Skrull Emperor with a hex, and his daughter, Annelle, ascends the throne and ceases hostilities. The new Supreme Intelligence appoints Captain Marvel to be rule of the Kree Empire in order to cement a lasting peace with the Skrulls and then takes off to explore the cosmos, adding that someday he will master the universe

The team took center stage again #25 (1981) for "What If Thor Fought Odin Over Jane Foster?" a takeoff on *Thor* #136. Thor refused to obey his father's dictate to put aside his lady, and enlisted the aid of Goliath, the Wasp, Hawkeye, Captain America, Iron Man and the Scarlet Witch (with Quicksilver bowing out), to fight the armies of Odin, rallied by Loki. The heroes had their powers hyped by Asgardian magic and a titantic war ensued in Asgard. Iron-Man got killed—again—but the Wasp's sting proved sufficient to slay Loki. Peace came, but Thor and Odin were forever separated.

The group was absent from the mag until issue #29 (1981), "What If the Avengers Were the Last Superheroes on Earth?" This was a reworking of *Avengers Annual* #2, in which the Scarlet Centurion manipulated the five original Avengers into defeating every other super-being on earth. The difference came about when the "new" Avengers didn't turn up in this alternate world, and the original group simple disbanded after neutralizing the Hulk's powers. The Centurian then threatened to conquer the world, but the four heroes banded together again briefly to stop him.

What If #32 (1982), the most recent issue as of this writing, played off the Michael multi-parter in a tale written and laid out by Mark Gruenwald, "What If the Avengers Had Become the Pawns of Korvac?" As it transpired, in this epic Michael (Korvac) actually *did* waste the Avengers, and then recreated them as his emissaries of evil. The story was replete with every cosmic entity imaginable: the Celestials, the Watchers, Galactus, the Grandmaster, the Stranger, the Shaper, the Living Tribunal, etc. In the end, Michael gained the Ultimate Nullifier, a doomsday device on Galactus' spaceship, and finally annihilated himself and eternity, destroying an entire universe. Fun stuff, huh?

These eight are the only "alternate" Avengers realities shown to date. However, given the team's popularity and wealth of characters, plus the eagerness of third generation scripters to use them, they should be around to grace many *What If?s* to come

THE KREE-SKRULL WAR

by Joey Cavalieri

You had every right to be disappointed, disgusted and disaffected when you picked up Avengers #93 up off the newsstand

After all, the price had gone up—again—and when you paged through the book for an explanation, you got the all-too-familiar Soda Pop Rap. You know, the little yellow box on the letters page that whines, "Golly, we're sorry comics aren't a dime any more, gang, but even the prices of candy, hot dogs and soda pop have gone up. . ." Before you can say, "So who buys candy, hot dogs and soda pop?" the box goes on to promise big things in the future.

But this time, they weren't jiving about "big things." The book itself was certainly bigger, since Marvel had decided to increase its line across the board to thirty-four pages of art for twenty-five cents

And "big things" were in the offing for sure, because Roy Thomas and Neal Adams were presenting an adventure story on the grandest scale Marvel had yet attempted: a clash between *two galaxies*—the Kree-Skrull War! Had you really grumbled while forking that quarter over to the newsdealer, it couldn't have been long until disappointment turned to delight!

Issue 93 opens with "This Beachhead Earth." Thomas titled each chapter of his magnum opus with a burlesqued title of classic screen or prose science fiction. This one refers to *This Island Earth*, the fifties film where mutants from Metaluna make off with Faith Domergue for God-knows-what purpose. As the story begins, the Vision stumbles into Avengers headquarters. "Help me, please help me," are the last words he can force his mouth to utter before collapsing. Is he. . .dead? Can he be revived?

Only one man can find out for sure. In "Journey to the Center of the Android," (the title a tip-of-the-hat to Jules Verne) Ant-Man and his trusted pet ants, Crosby, Stills and Nash, take a "fantastic voyage" of sorts inside the Vision's synthezoid body. They dodge android antibodies, push a couple of buttons here and there and soon the Vision is back on his feet.

You and I might crack a smile upon bouncing off a deathbed, but the Vision is not so tempted. Grim-visaged as ever, he related that while he, Quicksilver, the Scarlet Witch and Goliath (Clint Barton, not Hank Pym, scorekeepers) were out cruising in a rented car looking for Captain Marvel, they were set upon by cows. Evil cows, these. Without warning, the cattle metamorphosed into members of the Fantastic Four, went on to defeat them and abduct the mutants.

Cows indeed! The Vision's story may seem suspect, but all is explained in part three, "War of the Weirds" (the title recalls H.G. Wells). The cows are revealed as the protean Skrulls, the very same Skrulls the Fantastic Four defeated in F.F. #2! It is they who have captured Captain Marvel and his protege, Carol Danvers. They gloat over their prisoners, but then depart to battle Goliath, Rick Jones, and the rest of the Avengers.

Conveniently left alone, Mar-Vell shatters his bonds and frees Carol. He knows he must warn the members of his race, the Kree, that the Skrulls, their oldest, fiercest enemy, are preparing to war against them. Deftly, he uses his Uni-Beam to forge. . .an Omni-Wave projector to transmit a warning to his home planet. Mar-Vell knows that the Omni-Wave is not only the secret of instantaneous communication through space, but can be used as a deadly weapon in the wrong hands. . .and Skrulls head the list of "wrong hands!" This realization forces Mar-Vell to destroy the Omni-Wave instead.

This frustrates Carol no end. Why should she care? She drops her masquerade. . .and becomes. . .the Super Skrull! While the Avengers conquer the Skrulls below, the Super-Skrull hijacks Pietro, Wanda and Mar-Vell into the sky above.

Issue #94: Marvel was still up in the air over what package to sell a funnybook-buying public, but settled on the twenty-cent, twenty-three page magazine for the rest of the War, at least.

"More than Inhuman" (a salute there to Sturgeon) depicts the plight of the Vision as he stows aboard the Super-Skrull's starship. The android, however, is no match for the Skrull, who carries out his scheme to drop a bomb on the Great Refuge. Yes, to make matters muddier, Thomas introduces still a third race into the fray. . .the uncanny Inhumans! Miraculously, the Refuge is unharmed, yet the Vision finds he cannot defeat the Skrull, and retreats.

In part two, "1971: A Space Odyssey," (a Kubrick/Clarke tribute there) the Super-Skrull gets a cool reception from the Skrull Emperor, who opens fire on his subject as the ship tries to land. After ridding himself of his Skrull rival, the Emperor turns his attention to his heroic hostages. He has Pietro and Wanda tortured, hoping this will force Mar-Vell to divulge the secret of the Omni-Wave. "Set them free, Majesty, and you shall have your Omni-Wave," declares Mar-Vell.

Part three, "Behold the Mandroids," named for a Moorcock novel, focuses on H. Warren Craddock, a government gadfly who believes the Avengers are dupes of the Great Kree Conspiracy. To arrest the super-team, Craddock dispatches a band of Mandroids, men in titanium-powered exoskeletons that amplify the wearer's strength and do a few other kooky things. As they square off outside Avengers Mansion, who should make a last-panel cameo but . . . Triton of the Inhumans! And which side is *he* on?

Avengers #95 opens with "Something Inhuman This Way Comes." (A bit of a bow to Bradbury there.) Once the Avengers dispose of the Mandroids, Triton relates that the Great Refuge is again in dire straits. Once more, Black Bolt's nutjob cousin, Maximus the Mad, has free run of the joint, while Black Bolt himself is missing somewhere in San Francisco. It's the Avengers' job to find him, restore his rule, and foil a Kree plot to recruit the Inhumans in their war agains the Skrulls. The local Kree recruiter, disappointed, perhaps, in his inability to sign up a Gorgon or Medusa or even a Lockjaw, abducts Rick Jones instead.

The following issue, titled "The Andromeda Swarm," in deference to the admirable Michael Crichton, pits the Avengers against a Skrull armada, deep in outer space. The Skrull Emperor taunts our heroes with the sight of the comatose bodies of Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, and the revelation that Captain Marvel is constructing a *new* Omni-Wave projector, exclusively for Skrull use.

No sooner is this bad news broadcast, than the Skrulls realize they've been holding prisoner a mere *hologram* of Mar-Vell. "If you cretins had done your homework," the man of Kree says, "you'd know the Omni-Wave can also cast images, which you've been scrupulously guarding while I stole around behind you!" If you're interested, the Omni-Wave also sliced vegetables.

As Mar-Vell revives Wanda and Pietro, the Skrull mothership issues a small ethercraft armed with a nuclear warhead. Destination: Earth. (No, that isn't a chapter title.) Goliath tails the craft in his ship, and soon smashes his way on board.

Meanwhile, on Hala, the Kree home-planet, Rick Jones is brought before Ronan the Accuser, the new Kree supremor. Rick learns from him that the Kree also plan to either occupy or annihilate Earth, strictly for strategic purposes. When Rick tries to escape and warn his friends, Ronan locks him in a room with the deposed supremor, the Intelligence Supreme. The greatest mind in the Kree galaxy with the Wizard of Oz countenance has been secretly manipulating events in the Kree-Skrull War, and now has a brand, spanking new idea. He ostensibly zaps Rick into the Negative Zone, there to face Annihilus.

The wrap-up was provided in issue #98, "Godhood's End," named for an Arthur C. Clarke novel. Somehow, Rick is able to defeat Annihilus by using the power of his mind alone. Further exercising his mental muscles, he frees himself from the Negative Zone, and stands once more before the Intelligence Supreme.

We find out that it's Mar-Vell and his Omni-Wave that have pushed Rick into the Zone, accidentally. "The Omni-Wave is too dangerous to be employed—by anyone!" intones Mar-Vell, as he destroys the projector once again. In fact, creating and destroying Omni-Wave projectors has become his hobby.

In the interim, Ronan suspects insubordination. He orders a Kree batallion to kill Rick Jones and the Intelligence Supreme. As they near, the apex of Kree intelligence bids Rick to concentrate upon his childhood memories, to think back to the comic books he read as a child.

Rick obeys and in a turn of events that gives whole new meanings to the phrase *deus ex machina*, no less that eight Timely heroes suddenly spring up out of thin air. Before you can say, "Okay, Axis here we come!" Captain America, the original Human Torch, the Sub-Mariner, the Fin, the Angel, the Blazing Skull, the original Vision and the Patriot plow through the oncoming Kree. Then, just as quickly as they appeared, they fade into a zip-a-tone haze.

The Intelligence Supreme bids Rick to concentrate once more. A bolt of energy from both Rick and his former *alter ego*, Captain Marvel, freezes every last Kree and Skrull in his tracks.

All but *one*, that is. There's still one Skrull remaining on Earth, impersonating H. Warren Craddock. His guise is suddenly torn away. . .right in front of a mob of Earth people, hypnotized by "Craddock" into hating and destroying all aliens. Ironically, the crowd turns upon the swindling Skrull, and kills him.

Exhausted, Rick Jones collapes. The expenditure of mental energy has been too much for him. He is revived only when Mar-Vell "merges" with Rick, sacrificing his life-force for the boy.

The Intelligence Supreme conjures the Avengers before him, then transports them back to Earth. But one of their numbers is missing. "Aye," sayeth Thor, ". . .when all Avengers *living* were summoned into one unspeakably powerful presence—there was one that did not appear, and one alone—the Avenger called *Goliath!*"

The camera pulls back, up over the rooftops of Manhattan, and the credits roll: Roy Thomas scripted the entire melee, Neal Adams' unmistakeable pencilling graced all but the "1971: A Space Odyssey" chapter in issue #94, and the climax issue. Tom Palmer inked virtually all of it as well, receiving an assist only on issue #96 from Adams and Alan Weiss. Calligrapher Sam Rosen got to put words in everyone's mouths. Their collaboration produced a series of collector's items that remain the high watermark of the series. I'm having my copies bound. You?

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THE MIGHTY ASSEMBLERS!

"NEVER WALK BAREFOOT ON THE PAVEMENT!"

--THUS, BY THE POWER HEREWITH VESTED IN ME--AS THIS MONTH'S ACTING CHAIRMAN OF THE MIGHTY ASSEMBLERS--
I DOTH HEREBY CALLETH THIS MEETING TO ORDER!
ANOTHER PANDEMONIOUS PARODY--PROUDLY PRODUCED
by ©DON MARTINEC

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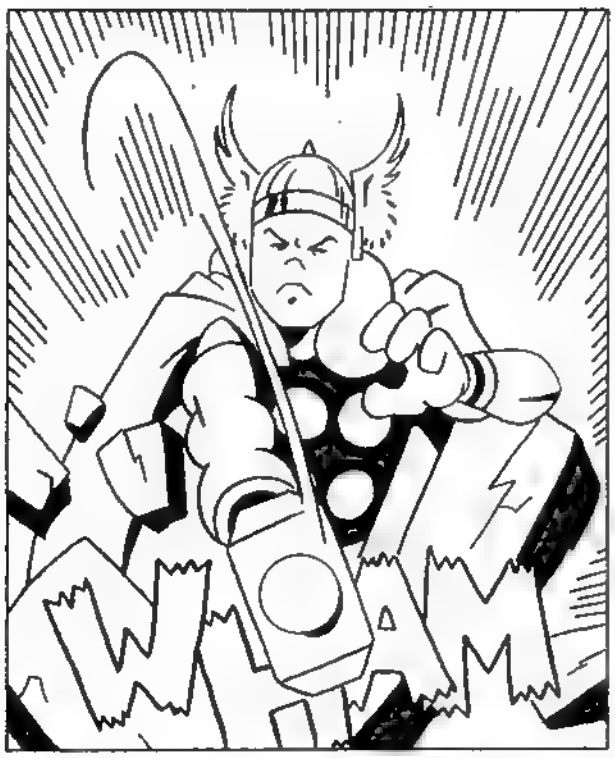

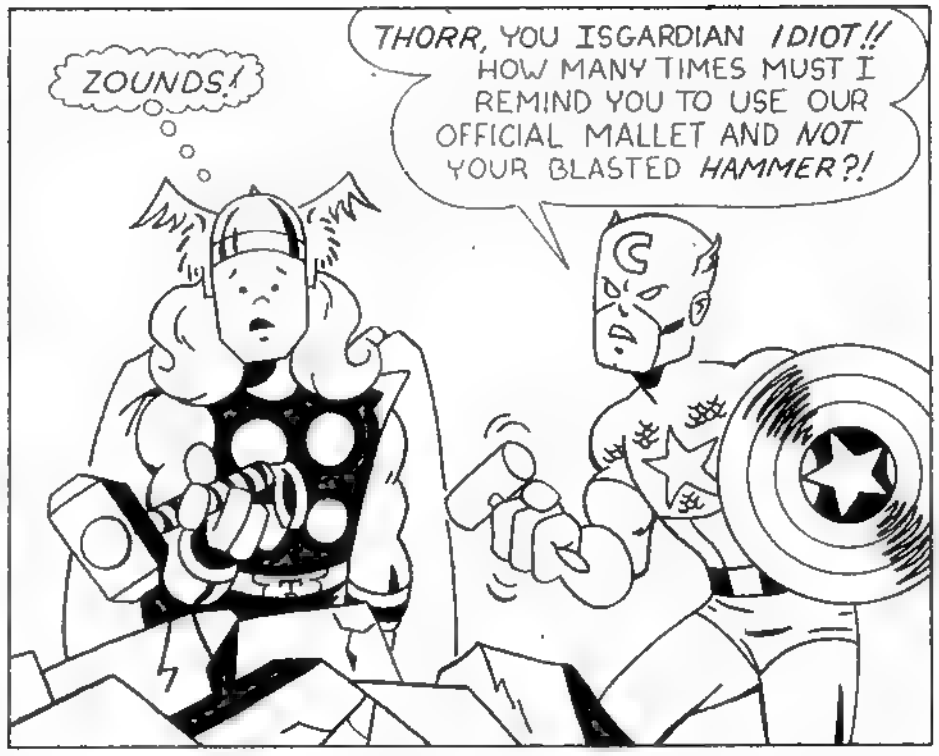

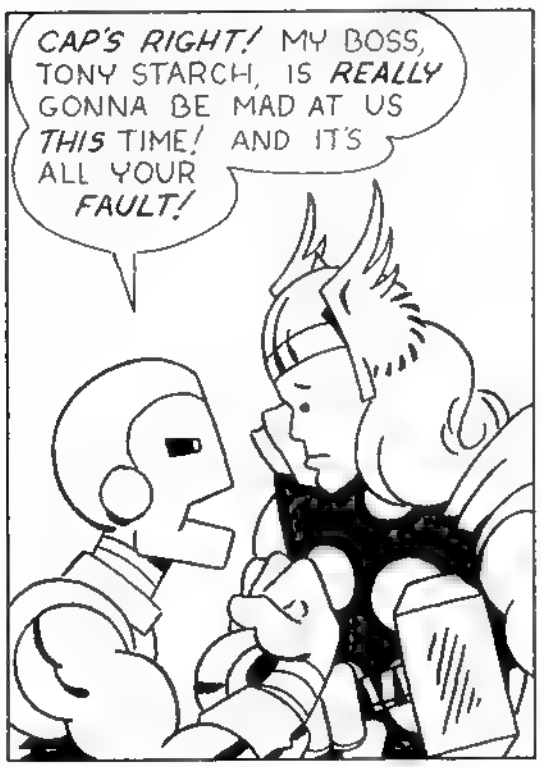

WHOA, FELLAS! BREAK IT UP! WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME TEAM, REMEMBER? YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A BUNCH OF SPOILED KIDS!
OH YEAH?
YOU TELL 'EM BIG FELLA!
FORSOOTH!

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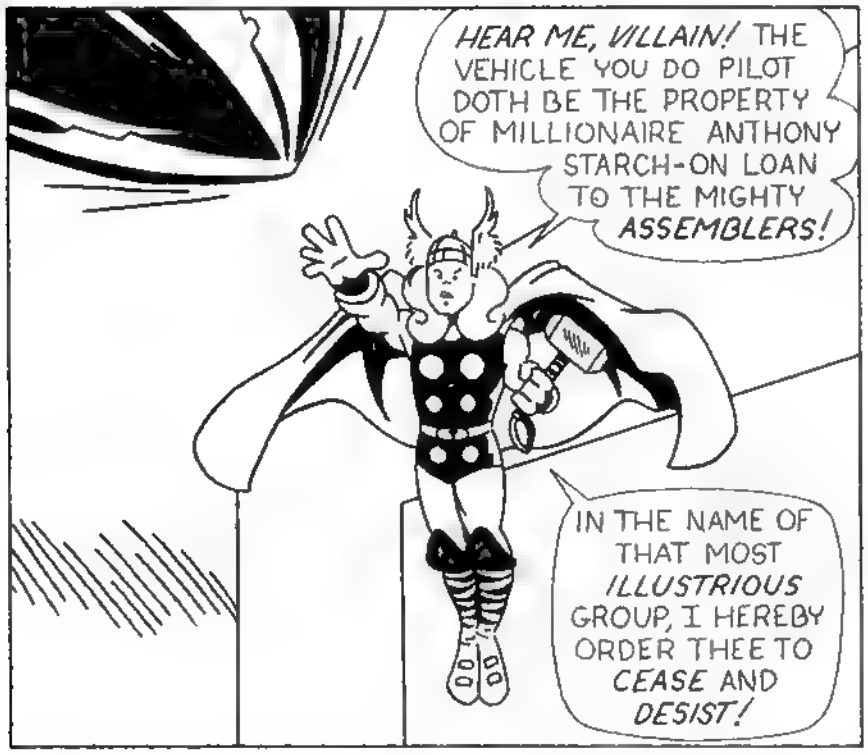
HEAR ME, VILLAIN! THE VEHICLE YOU DO PILOT DOTH BE THE PROPERTY OF MILLIONAIRE ANTHONY STARCH-ON LOAN TO THE MIGHTY ASSEMBLERS!
IN THE NAME OF THAT MOST ILLUSTRIOUS GROUP, I HEREBY ORDER THEE TO CEASE AND DESIST!

AND, AFTER GIGANTIC MAN DEPOSITS THE SHIP GENTLY UPON THE GROUND---
IF YOU GUYS ARE THROUGH FOOLING AROUND, LET'S FIND OUT WHO'S BEEN JOYRIDING IN ASSEMBLER PROPERTY!
RRUNCH!

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HOLY COW! IT'S... DICK JONES!

I-I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

LOOK AT HIS EYES! HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN SHOCK!

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

WE'D BETTER GET HIM INSIDE!

THEN, AFTER THE COMBINED MIGHT OF THE ASSEMBLERS HAS RUSHED THE STRICKEN DICK INTO THEIR MANSION HEADQUARTERS...

IT'S OBVIOUS THE LAD IS IN A *TRANCE* OF SOME SORT! ONLY HOW DO WE SNAP HIM *OUT* OF IT?

LET *ME* GIVE IT A TRY, CAP!

ALAKAZAM!

DAMES! I *KNEW* SHE COULDN'T DO IT!

SHOOP!

LEMME TRY A *STUN-ARROW* ON 'IM!

HAVE YOU GONE *NUTS?* HE ALREADY *IS* STUNNED!

HEY! WATCH IT!

MEANWHILE, UNBEKNOWNST TO THE UNWARY ASSEMBLERS-- THEY HAVE A MYSTERIOUS, UNINVITED GUEST LURKING JUST A FEW FEET AWAY...

'TWAS AN EASY TASK FOR ONE SUCH AS *I* TO STEAL--UNNOTICED--INTO THEIR VERY *MIDST*-- BY USE OF A SIMPLE *TRANCE* ON AN EVEN *SIMPLER* HUMAN BEING!

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AND NOW IT IS *TIME!* TIME FOR THE FINAL *DOWNFALL* OF THE MIGHTY *ASSEMBLERS!*

MYSTIC SPELL IS CAST-- AND SUDDENLY...

HEAD'S UP, ASSEMBLERS! SOMETHING'S BURSTING THRU THE *FLOOR!*

BE ON *GUARD* ALL!

WHAT CAN IT *BE?*

KKRRAAKKOOOM

GRAVEL MEN-- ATTACKING US!

ASSEMBLERS AVENGE!

I DON'T *GET* IT! WHY WOULD THEY RETURN *NOW--* AFTER ALL THESE *MONTHS?*

THERE'S YOUR ANSWER GIGANTIC MAN!

FLOATING ABOVE THE ONRUSHING HORDE--*IT'S--*

WOW!

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--THE ENRAPTURESS! OF COURSE! THE GRAVEL MEN MUST BE UNDER ONE OF HER SPELLS! SHE'S PROBABLY ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT'S HAPPENED TO DICK!

CORRECT, THOU STAR-SPANGLED SIMPLETON!

BANG!

BUT EVEN THOUGH THOU DO REALIZE WHO THY ATTACKERS BE-- THAT KNOWLEDGE CANNOT POSSIBLY AID YOU NOW!

ATTACK, MY GRAVEL MEN! DESTROY THE ASSEMBLERS!!

HEY, BIG FELLA, HOW'S ABOUT LETTIN' ME HAVE A CRACK AT 'EM?

OH, SORRY, BIRDSEYE!

THEY'RE ALL YOURS!

HEY WAIT A MINUTE! HOLD IT!

I GIVE UP! I QUIT! I'M NOT AN ASSEMBLER ANYMORE-- I RESIGN!

VERILY, THE CAUSE DOTH SEEM TRULY - HOPELESS! FOR EACH ENEMY WE DISPATCH--> A DOZEN MORE DO TAKETH HIS PLACE!

KA-BOOM!

EVEN THOUGH MY HEX POWER CAN CAUSE THE GRAVEL MEN TO MELT, I COULD NEVER HANDLE THEM ALL!

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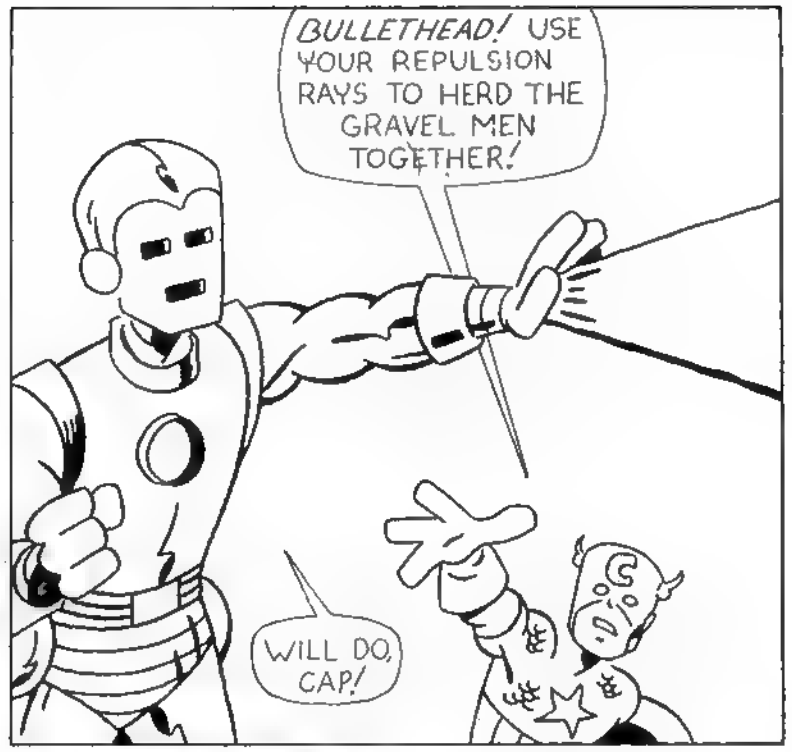

GOOD WORK, THORR! IF I GUESSED CORRECTLY, THE HEAT FROM THE LIGHTNING SHOULD *SOFTEN* THEIR BODIES AND--! *IT'S WORKING!*
AND *NOW*-- ERE THEY CANST FULLY *RECOVER*--

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--CAUSING IT TO COMPLETELY *ENVELOP* THE GRAVEL MEN-- INSTANTLY *COOLING* THEIR *SUPER-HEATED* BODIES!

WHOOOSH

FASTER AND FASTER SPINS THE MYSTIC HAMMER! THEN, AFTER THE GREAT WINDS BEGIN TO SUBSIDE...

THEY'RE WELDED TOGETHER! COMPLETELY *HELPLESS!*

AND THAT'S NOT *ALL!*

LOOK WHAT I FOUND BACK *HERE!*

I'VE HEARD OF BEING CLOSE TO YOUR EMPLOYEES, BUT *THIS* IS *RIDICULOUS!*

CLOAT ALL THOU *WISH* TO, ASSEMBLERS! 'TIS MERELY A *TEMPORARY* SETBACK!

YEAH, I'LL *BET!*

UH-- HEY GUYS--

--GET ME OUTTA HERE, WILLYA?

I DIDN'T *REALLY* QUIT--*HONEST!*

ONCE AN ASSEMBLER, *ALWAYS* AN ASSEMBLER --*RIGHT?*

AW, C'MON!

THE BIRD

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Yellowjacket's Personal Problem

by Daniel Schweiger

Henry Pym was a brilliant scientist and a daring superhero. He had a loving wife and a laboratory that was every researcher's envy. As one of Marvel's first costumed characters, Pym was a founding member of the Avengers. Throughout 20 years, he fought crime as Ant-Man, Giant-Man, Goliath, and Yellowjacket. But in no more than two issues of "The Avengers," Henry Pym went mad, was extradited from the group, and eventually put in jail. It wasn't the Pupper Master who was behind this shocking event, nor any spilled chemicals. Pym had suffered a nervous breakdown

What brought this wholly rational man to the point of madness? Now, that the worst has happened, it is time to look back upon Pym's career and examine the events which led him to the breaking point. Let us go underneath the cool exterior of Henry Pym, and find out how complex he really was

Pym was an up and coming bio-geneticist in the early 1960's. His radical theories had caused much controversy in the field, and as a result he was ridiculed by the scientific community. To escape their constant harassment, Pym would lock himself into a laboratory for days on end. Then he met the beautiful Maria Trovaya, a Russian defector. They soon fell in love and were married.

For their honeymoon, it was decided to travel to Communist-controlled Hungary. Even though it was highly dangerous for her to venture there, Maria wanted to visit the country where she had spent her childhood. After leaving the airport, Maria was assaulted by a group of thugs. Henry tried to stop them, but was knocked unconscious by a pistol butt. Later, recovering at the American Embassy, Pym learned that his wife had been murdered. Unable to accept the news, his usually rational mind snapped. Pym went on a rampage trying to find her killers, and was soon thrown into jail.

Convinced that there was nothing more he could do, Pym flew back to America. Sitting in his laboratory with Maria's image still on his mind, he swore to fight the underworld with his scientific prowess. After unending hours of experiments, Henry invented a strange gas that would shrink him down to the size of an ant He used it on himself and discovered that he could also telepathically communicate with the insects. Donning a red and blue jumpsuit, equipped with a protruding metal helmet, Henry Pym assumed the identity of Ant-Man

Ironically, the first villains he fought were Communists. With their defeats, Pym felt some sense of revenge, but nothing could make him forget Maria. So the Ant-Man battled on, but the pressure of being a superhero started to get at him. The foes became more powerful, and Pym feared that if he should fall, there would be no one to replace him. Convinced that he needed a partner, he befriended Janet Van Dyne, an heiress seeking revenge on her father's killer. Seeing that he'd found the ideal companion who was fueled by the same anger which possessed him, Pym made an offer. Before she had a chance to agree, Henry boldly revealed his secret identity to her, all the more pushing Jan into accepting the proposal. She readily complied, and was injected with specialized cells which would give her a pair of wings and antennae when insect-size. Naming her the Wasp, they became the newest crime-fighting team of the country. Almost immediately, Jan fell in love with her new mentor, but the spectre of Maria prevented Henry from expressing his feelings. The pair continued to work together, but with a thick cloud of tension between them.

One day a call for help came from the Teen Brigade. The Hulk was on the loose, and someone had to stop him from causing more damage. Ant-Man and the Wasp responded to the summons, and were soon battling the behemoth alongside Iron Man and Thor. When the fight was over, upon Henry's suggestion, the five merged to become the Avengers, a group who would fight the villains no single superhero could withstand. Pym now had a sense of belonging and importance. There were people who depended on him for leadership and mechanical innovations. It was this sense of companionship that humanized him just a little bit more.

After experimenting further with the shrinking gas, Pym discovered that he could reverse its effects, and assume gargantuan proportions. The result was Giant-Man. From this dramatic change, Pym hoped that his increased power would be a further asset to the team

But instead, it worked exactly the opposite way. The stress of continually growing and shrinking took their toll. Pym was almost in a constantly exhausted state. He became more of a problem to the Avengers than a help. To make his new guise less of a failure, Henry assumed the name of Goliath. Thankfully, this agonizing period ended when his body chemistry adapted to the new formula. Finally, the powers became fully realized

Unnoticed through this phase was Jan. Upset because of the lack of attention given to her by Henry, she now began flirting with other males of the group. Seeing this, Pym tried harder and harder to prove himself to Jan by the only way he knew how: a scientific breakthrough

And it came soon enough in the evil form of Ultron. As the robot's gears whirred to life, it attacked its father, and erased all memory of itself from Henry's brain.

For years the Avengers remained unaware of the indestructable robot's existence, allowing it to fulfill its Oedipian ambitions. The first was the death of its "father." To accomplish this, Ultron manufactured a synthezoid from the original Human Torch's android body. Dubbing it the Vision, Ultron sent the construct out to destroy the Avengers. But instead of striking the heroes, the Vision rebelled against his master, and Ultron was defeated for the moment.

Having nowhere to go, and wishing to learn more of the world he was brought into, the Vision requested a membership in the Avengers In order to find out more information on their mysterious ally, Pym plugged into a memory bank, and the shocking truth of what he had created was then revealed. Henry was seemingly unmoved by the information, but inside, the horror of Ultron was too much to bear.

Pym retreated to his laboratory as he always did during times of stress. While pondering his inability to profess his love for Janet, a batch of chemicals was accidentally dropped. Under the stress, Pym's mind split and took on the persona of Yellowjacket who was in every way the opposite of Henry Pym. Under this aggressive facet, he was finally able to pop the question to Jan When the wedding was over and truth revealed, she took it in stride. Now, with a new sense of confidence, Pym retained the Yellowjacket identity as a lucky charm against bad luck.

For a while, everything went well. Henry continued to experiment on methods of enhancing his powers, once briefly sojourning as the Ant-Man. Jan was as deeply in love with him as ever, and tried her hardest to be the ideal wife. Seeking a respite from the frenetic careers of superheroes, they dropped out of the Avengers to further pursue their own interests.

But this period of bliss was shattered when a bored Jan suggested that they return to the team. After only a few hours back on active duty, a mine exploded at almost point-blank range near the Wasp. A critically injured Janet Van Pym was rushed to the hospital. The prognosis was that it would be a miracle if she lasted the night. Until Jan recovered, Pym roamed the streets in a mad quest for vengeance, flying into rage at the merest agitation.

Jan satiated his anger for the while, but things would never be the same again. Failure after failure in the laboratory drove Pym to despair. His mind eventually collapsed under the stress and reverted back to the days of the just-formed Avengers. Aided by an ant armada, Ant-Man attacked the Avengers mansion. While the rest of the team struggled with the swarm, the Wasp flew into the battle and turned her sting on Henry. As the Avengers pulled themselves back together, Jan revealed that her husband's mental problems had begun many years before.

Therapy was immediately begun on the distraught Henry Pym. The Avengers hoped that their partner would be cured in a matter of days, but just as their ambitions were realized, Ultron reappeared and kidnapped Pym. With the aid of mind-bending machinery, the robot persuaded him to transfer Jan's lifeforce into a mechanical look-alike (Jocasta), thereby enabling Ultron to marry his "father's" wife. The Avengers arrived in time to thwart its plans, but Henry was left a raving lunatic.

An intense period of mental readjustment commenced, and Henry Pym was brought back to normalcy. He was soon fighting with the team as a full-fledged member, and the pieces of his damaged mind began to come together.

Suddenly, the government revoked the Avenger's priority status because of lax security. It was reinstated on the condition that the supergroup would keep a more secure headquarters. But the federal harassment wasn't over yet. At a meeting attended by National Security Council agent Henry Gyrich, it was announced that only 7 members could remain. The Wasp was one of them, but Yellowjacket was nowhere on the list. Pym took the blow with good humor on the surface, but underneath his macho exterior, he was crushed by the rejection. Pym was now nothing but a loser, a failure as a superhero. He returned to the laboratory a broken man.

There Pym remained until summoned by the mental call of Moondragon. It was time for the old order to changeth once again. Yellowjacket was only too happy to answer the request and volunteer for his old position. The offer was accepted, and Henry Pym was overjoyed.

More setbacks changed that. Pym's mood veered dangerously from rationali-

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ty to insanity. Henry was simmering with rage, and all it took was a broken disruptor to careen him over the edge.

The new Avengers were soon called out to Washington D.C. to stop the rampage of the mutant Elfqueen. In the middle of the battle, Captain America tried to make peace with the Marauder. Just as it seemed he was on the verge of doing so, a furious Yellowjacket fired at her back Enraged by the sneak attack, Elfqueen continued her destruction. Finally, without the interference of his teammate, Captain America convinced her to depart in peace.

The events of the incident were forgotten, all except for Henry's seemingly treacherous attack. Captain America decided to press charges. The penalty would be the severest expulsion. A court martial was convened, and in the meantime, Yellowjacket was forced to turn in his priority card

At home, Jan tried her hardest to ease Henry up for the upcoming proceedings. He spurned her care and locked himself into the laboratory. After three days, another Ultron-like being was created, Salvation-1. Its purpose was to smash into Avenger's mansion when the trial was going badly to defeat the heroes, and for Yellowjacket at the climax of the fight, to blast the robot's weak point which he alone knew about. It was through this insane plan that Pym hoped to regain status and respectability in the Avengers. What he didn't know was that the rest of the group was planning to dismiss all charges against their friend, and forget the incident. In the meanwhile, a concerned Jan snuck into the laboratory to check on her husband's welfare. She was discovered by Henry, who slapped her and swore her to secrecy.

Soon, the trial commenced. Captain America took the stand and voiced his opinions for dismissal. The speech was to the point, but hardly swayed anyone's verdict. Then it came time for Henry Pym to take the stand in his own defense. At that moment, sight of his fellow comrades incriminating him, a founding member, was too much to bear. Pym's mind snapped at the crucial moment and from his mouth spewed forth madness. When he was done, the stunned group rested silently at the table. Seeing that it was hopeless, Pym activated the remote control unit to summon Sal

Instantly, the giant robot smashed through the wall, cutting down the heroes as Pym knew it would. As Salvation-1 turned towards him, Yellowjacket aimed for the weak spot, but before he could activate his disruptor, Henry was grasped by the robot's adamantium claw. The Wasp confessed of her husband's plan, and selflessly completed his task. Henry Pym calmly picked himself up, and with the words "Guess I'll go," he walked out of the mansion, this time for good

That was the last the world heard of the hero Yellowjacket, and the man called Henry Pym. Now there was only a crushed ex-scientist Deeply depressed, Henry returned to Jan for comfort, but was met with the announcement of an impending divorce. Totally heartbroken, he drifted into the city. Penniless, Henry turned to alcohol.

And there he remained, until found by the villainous Egghead. In a stupor, Henry accepted the criminal's offer to attach a mechanical arm to Trish Starr. It would be Egghead's gift for all the times that he used his niece in his schemes, one of which resulted in the loss of her arm. Pym, unsuspecting and $500,000 richer, flew off to Arizona for the purpose of carrying out the mission. With the money he had gained, Henry intended to win back his wife and start a new life. This burst of confidence finally brought him back to his senses. The future now looked brighter than ever.

Unfortunately, the arm was but a ruse which enslaved Trish to Egghead's will. Under the threat of killing her, Yellowjacket was forced to raid S.A.C. headquarters for a valuable supply of adamantium. Before stealing the chemicals which would give the master criminal an invincible robot army, Pym signalled the Avengers, hoping they could right the situation.

The group arrived soon enough, blocking Yellowjacket's getaway With the repeated threat on Trish's life, Henry was forced to battle his teammates. After a furious scuffle, Pym was defeated. As he tried to prove his innocence, Egghead destroyed all the proof that he controlled the mechancial arm. Reluctantly, Yellowjacket surrendered to the authorities. Within a few days, the man who had saved the world many times over was behind bars.

Henry Pym was cool and collected on the surface. To many he seemed the typical boring scientist. Underneath however, he was but a small boy, anxious to please and easily hurt. To show strength, he prevented his emotions from coming to the surface. This show of resilience hurt Pym more than anything else. Whenever a mishap in the lab occurred, the id would come bursting to the surface and engulf its master. He couldn't handle the bottled feelings, and could do nothing but to let them carry him along until they were satisfied Then Henry would return to normalcy until another outburst occurred.

Janet Van Dyne was all anyone could wish for in a wife. Loving and devoted, she tried her hardest to make life easier for Pym, acting as a buffer between him and the outside world. Whenever Henry was about to vent his submerged emotions, Jan was there to comfort him. When she first started as the Wasp, she assumed the role of "air-headed Jan" trying to be cheerful in the face of her partner's private tirades. Jan hoped that by overlooking the problem, things would get better. When she married Henry as Yellowjacket, Jan gave a sort of justification to his sickness. But, as matters got progressively worse, she lost her winsomeness and got back down to earth. Afraid to go to a marriage counselor, Jan snuck off to psychiatrists on her own. They told her that the solution was to pay more attention to her husband. She did it too well, propping up his faltering ego at every opportunity. Unable to figure out the reason for the attention, he reasoned that his wife was masking a failure and looked down upon himself even more.

Compared to the other Avengers, Yellowjacket and the Wasp were not very powerful. Iron Man had the invincible armor that Pym had never been able to create. Thor was a god, who always defeated the unbeatable foes. Captain America was a living legend, and had the drive that Henry lacked. In any of his incarnations, all Pym was capable of was decreasing and increasing in size, and later, firing stun blasts

Throughout the years that Henry Pym battled mental sickness, the Avengers knew about it, but were too embarrassed to offer help. When the Wasp's revelation finally came, it shocked no one. If the superheroes had been able to break out of their shells and offer Henry assistance, the end may have been averted.

After all the events have been played out, what this unfortunate incident proves is that superheroes are as fallible to love, hate, and anger as anyone else. Even with their powers, this select group has never risen above the fault of humanity.

Who Am I This Month?

by J.A. Fludd

When Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created *The Avengers* in 1963, it was with a fairly simple premise in mind: the book would be Marvel's equivalent of *the Justice League of America* and feature a team made up of some of the most popular heroes from already established comics. All of the original Avengers had series of their own. Ant-Man and the Wasp from *Tales to Astonish,* Iron Man from *Tales of Suspense,* Thor from *Journey Into Mystery,* and the Hulk, who had his own title.

Brilliant as they were, Lee and Kirby probably could not have anticipated how incredibly complicated the history of the Avengers would become Because most of its characters were transplanted in from other books, *The Avengers* saw the beginnings of the elaborate inter-relationships between the various Marvel comics. If the Marvel Universe had been "born" two years earlier in *The Fantastic Four,* it surely did a good deal of its growing in *The Avengers.*

Within *The Avengers* is a cluster of heroes and villains who offer monumental tangles of plot and character. With these figures we find a mind-boggling system of stories within stories, a puzzle that is at once compelling and confounding. The pieces of the puzzle, by and large, are the work of four writers Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, Steve Englehart, and Jim Shooter. Let us familiarize ourselves a bit with the characters involved

The Vision, an android super-hero who is one of the most powerful Avengers. Though he is for the most part a strictly rational, logical being, the Vision's capacity for emotion (which he sometimes denies) is largely attributable to the fact that his computer brain patterns were taken from the brain of. . .

Wonder Man (Simon Williams). Invulnerable and nearly the equal of Thor in strength, Wonder Man first joined the Avengers to betray them to Zemo and the Masters of Evil, from whom he had acquired his powers (Issue 9). But Wonder Man was no villain at heart, and eventually he turned on the Avengers' foes, who apparently killed him as a result. The Avengers preserved Wonder Man's body, perhaps hoping that medical science would find a way to restore him at a later date (as the science of cryogenics suggests may be possible). They also recorded his brain patterns, which were given to Vision by. .

Ultron, an unspeakably evil super-robot who is the Avengers' arch-enemy One of Ultron's earliest schemes involved forcing Professor Phineas T Horton to re-design the body of his android creation, the original Human Torch, turning the Torch into the Vision (Issue 135). However, the Torch's persona still remained in the android, forcing Ultron to "erase" it and substitute the brain patterns of Wonder Man. Now that the android was more amenable to his will, Ultron tried to use him against the Avengers. But the innate goodness of Ultron's pawn brought him over to the Avengers' side, and the evil mechanoid was thwarted and (temporarily) destroyed (Issue 57). The following issue, it came out that Ultron had stolen the mental "imprints" of Wonder Man from the laboratory of. . .

Dr. Henry Pym, a scientist/superhero of many names and powers. At different times in his career, he has been Ant-Man, Giant-Man, Goliath, and Yellowjacket. It happened that Dr. Pym, during his Goliath phase, had *created* Ultron Pym had been trying to perfect a synthetic life-form (it was he who coined the term "synthozoid" to describe the Vision; "basically human. . except that your body is made of synthetic parts") and one of his efforts had gone awry. The nascent Ultron actually developed an Oedipus Complex and tried to murder his "father," as well as the other Avengers! In true arch-villainous fashion, Ultron always came within a hairsbreadth of destroying the awesome assembly, including the woman Dr. Pym loved . .

The Wasp (Janet Van Dyne), whom Henry Pym married in the identity of Yellowjacket (Issues #59 and #60). Until just recently, this wealthy young super-heroine was happy in her marriage, but her husband's mounting emotional problems have led them to the first super-hero divorce. Who would have thought that Ultron's Oedipus Complex would worsen over the years, so that he would come to see the Wasp as his "mother"? No one expected this until the creation of. . .

Jocasta, the female robot fittingly named for Oedipus' wife and mother in the classic Greek tragedies. In perhaps his most fiendish plot, Ultron drove Henry Pym to a nervous breakdown, causing him to regress back to Ant-Man (Issue #161). Thoroughly disoriented, Pym thought that the other Avengers were enemies with whom the Wasp had taken up. Ultron exploited the mental illness he had instilled in Dr. Pym to make him transfer the Wasp's life-force into the body of Ultron's metal "bride." The Avengers were barely able to stop this process and save the Wasp and Ant-Man/Yellowjacket (Issue #162). Ultron fled, and later he activated Jocasta with a "residual imprint" of the Wasp's energies in her body He fully intended to carry out his Oedipal drives by slaying his "father" and his other foes, while taking his "mother" (in the form of Jocasta) as a mate. But because Jocasta did contain part of the Wasp's psyche, she regarded Ultron with loathing. The vile robot was finally undone by the probability-warping hexes of the Vision's wife, the Scarlet Witch (Issues #170 and #171). After her liberation from Ultron, Jocasta served as an "assistant Avenger" and nearly became a full-fledged member before the last major upheaval in the Avengers' lineup (Issue #211).

If all of this seem confusing for readers to follow, think how bewildering it must be for the characters themselves. It makes one wonder how they are supposed to know who they are, when their identities are uprooted time and again! This is particularly so with the Vision. His sense of who he was took years to develop.

First, we must understand why the personality of Wonder Man was not reproduced in the Vision. In *The Avengers* #58, the Vision remarks that he has "the *amnesiac* brain patterns of a murdered man." Amnesia is the key, and it might lead us to believe that the ray-blast that "killed" Wonder Man also impaired his stored memories—but then, we must account for the fact that once he revived fully from his death-like state, all of his memories were intact. The truth of the matter is explained in Issue #135, which says the Ultron did not give the Vision the *exact* imprint of Simon William's mind; he simply used Wonder Man's brain patterns as a "model" to give the Vision a blank slate for a personality—a blank slate on which Ultron imposed what he wished

What does all this mean to the development of the Vision? Most significantly, it means that Wonder Man and the Vision are two completely individual characters, rather than two characters with the same psyche. This is something that Simon William's brother Eric Williams, the Grim Reaper, failed to understand. The Grim Reaper held the Avengers responsible for Simon's death and had been trying to destroy them since *The Avengers* #52. In Issue #79, he broke into the Avengers' files and learned from skimming the Vision's "biography" about the brain-wave transfer. Grasping onto the hope that the Vision was, in fact, some strange reincarnation of Simon Williams, the Reaper tried to win the Vision's loyalty away from the Avengers by offering to place the Vision's brain in the body of Captain America. (This was part of a plot by the Grim Reaper and the Space Phantom—see Issues #102, #106-108). The Reaper's rationale: ". . .You had no doubt that you were my brother and that you had the right to a human body—even at the expense of a fellow Avenger!"

No matter what the Grim Reaper tried, he could not defeat the Avengers. Finally, he stole Wonder Man's body from them and had it re-animated by a voodoo priest known as Black Talon. Wonder Man arrived at Avengers' Mansion in a crate—from which he burst forth, somnolently accusing the Vision of stealing his mind (much to the shock of the Vision and the rest-of the team—see Issues #151-153). Even more inexplicable was that after the Avengers defeated Black Talon, Wonder Man remained "alive" and slowly returned to complete consciousness *(The Avengers Annual #6,* 1976.) Now the Grim Reaper returned to force the Avengers into a mock "trial" to determine whether the identity of Simon Williams resided in Wonder Man or the Vision. Two important developments occurred during the trial (Issue #160). Firstly, the Vision came to an understanding of himself: "Once I imagined, perhaps hoped, that in some way I was Simon Williams. *I am not!* What difference if I have the same brain waves? I am unique! I am the Vision! And thus. . .I am content"

At the same time, the truth about Wonder Man's seeming return from death (which the Black Panther had taken with a grain of salt) came out: Simon William's death-like state was really a suspension of his life-functions, as he was evolving into a new type of being with a super-energized cellular structure and glowing eyes (this was explained in greater detail in Issue #164).

After the Grim Reaper's defeat, Wonder Man and the Vision became good friends (the Vision had said, "Perhaps, if Wonder Man has stepped beyond humanity, he and I are true brothers.") But just after Simon Williams revived, the situation between him and the Vision had been difficult. The Vision had always harbored a sense of inferiority to the other Avengers because even though some of them were not human, they were all living beings in the conventional sense. Wonder Man's return upset the Vision's already fragile sense of belonging in the Avengers. ("What right have I to the mind which rightfully is his?"—Issue #152). After Wonder Man regained his awareness, the Vision made a point of avoiding him. Unable to voice his inner confusion, he also started to put distance between himself and the Scarlet Witch, placing a strain on their marriage. As his anger grew, he found himself ready to "relinquish" Scarlet to Wonder Man—who did not actually want her. Indeed, the Vision had decided to abandon *all* of his "foolish delusions of humanity," claiming that he was superior to human beings so as to protect himself from this alienation.

A fight then ensued between the Vision and Wonder Man (Issue #158), a fight which was short-lived and solved nothing. As we observed earlier, the matter was at last settled in the "trial" staged by the Grim Reaper.

As we have seen, some of the Vision's problems have stemmed from his mind and the contents thereof. However, an equally remarkable set of circumstances has involved the Vision's *body.*

In the beginning, the Vision had no reason to suspect that another being had inhabited his body. But then he battled a Sentinel in Issue #102, and the Sentinel made this analysis of the android Avenger: ". . .X-ray visi-probe reveals three decades vintage. . ." *Three decades!* Indeed, that episode took place in 1972, and the original Human Torch appeared for the first time in 1939. The Vision thought nothing of this implication that he had been in existence long before 1968 (his first *Avengers* appearance), but as the saying goes, the truth will come out. Other hints came in the form of paralyzing attacks of hydrophobia and claustrophobia (*Giant-Size Avengers* 2, Issues #118 and #122). These were totally bewildering, as androids with computer minds should not be given to such irrational panics. The Vision concluded that he was beginning to malfunction, that his mental cohesion was in serious trouble. It was the machinations of Kang the Conqueror that finally brought out the real story.

Kang had been trying to capture Mantis, "the Celestial Madonna," who was destined to be the mother of the most powerful being in the heavens. However, Mantis had befriended the Avengers, and Kang had to launch a number of elaborate campaigns to wrest her from them. One of these schemes involved an alliance with Immortus, the Master of Time (whom Kang was quick to betray) and the kidnapping of the Avengers to Limbo, where they were set upon by a number of foes who Kang snatched out of time just before

their deaths. These included the original Torch and Wonder Man. During the battle, the Vision was injured, and the Torch, who broke free of Kang's control, recognized the Vision's internal structure as his own. After Kang was beaten and his pawns were returned to the time periods from which they came, Immortus offered to allow the Vision and Mantis to enter their hidden pasts and learn the secrets of their origins. (Immortus was only pretending to be a villain; he was actually Kang's future self and wanted to show the Conqueror the error of his ways.)

On his odyssey into his previous life as the Human Torch, the Vision learned of the Torch's imprisonments in an air-tight steel tube buried in cement (by Professor Horton, in response to the public's fears about a flaming android) and under a swimming pool's winter glass cover (by a gangster named Sardo). This, then, explained the reason for the Vision's aversion to water and enclosed spaced, as did the revelation that Communist-allied criminals had buried the Torch alive in the desert after dousing him with a chemical that paralyzed him and took away his powers. However, the criminals had unwittingly interred him in the atomic testing grounds, so that when the bomb was detonated, the Torch was set free. As fate would have it, though, the radiation had accelerated his metabolism so that two years later, in 1955, he returned to the desert, where no one would be harmed—when the Torch went nova.

The Torch's body was recovered and reactivated by the Mad Thinker, who set him against Johnny Storm of the Fantastic Four. The android turned against the Thinker and was killed by the Thinker's computer slave, Quasimodo. Later, Ultron approached the Thinker seeking an android servant. The Thinker offered him the original Human Torch, and Ultron accepted—only to find that he needed Professor Horton to effect the proper repairs. Ultron abducted the Professor, who did the work under duress—but while he changed the Torch's body into that of the Vision, he left the Torch's personality intact. Ultron killed Horton and subdued the android, reprogramming him with the brain patterns of Wonder Man. This, then, was the birth of the Vision. (See *The Avengers* #129-135 and *Giant-Size Avengers* #2-4.)

During the "Ant-Man and Jocasta" episode (Issue #161), Ultron attacked the Avengers and blasted the Vision with a bolt of energy that, for all practical purposes, killed him. When he was reactivated (Issue #166), the Vision manifested a dramatic change in character, becoming colder, more emotionless, more robotic. Still, nothing has diminished his love for the Scarlet Witch, and he felt incomplete and at loose ends when Scarlet took a leave of absence from the Avengers to contemplate the condition of her own life (Issue #194). During this time, he briefly returned to his denial of his feelings. What the Vision seems to overlook when he does this is that his need to protect himself from human emotions is, itself, an emotional mechanism

Implicit in all of this is that the Vision has much in common with all the other androids and robots and aliens of popular fiction, all of the supposedly "emotionless" beings our imagination has conjured. A unique aspect of science-fiction, whether in comics, in books, or in the movies, is that it reflects on the condition of man by imparting human qualities to entities that are not human. Because we could not really understand a being which was truly inhuman and completely lacked any semblance of emotion, we can write convincingly about them only by portraying them as alienated beings, either striking out against humanity or trying to live with it. No other literary *genre* can let us see ourselves in such a special way. By being as unique as he is, the Vision reflects the uniqueness of the form of entertainment for which he was created.

The Vision's sense of being lost and out of place was echoed in the character of Wonder Man. While the Vision was perplexed and disturbed by his identity problems, Wonder Man was genuinely frightened of what he had become while he was dormant and still does his best to conceal it (Issues #160 and #194). We practically never see him without the dark sunglasses that hide his blazing energy eyes

After his revival from dormancy, Wonder Man was traumatized by the idea of his having "died." As a result, he suffered a neurotic fear of failure or death in battle situations, which has often led him to a self-deprecating attitude in which he has questioned his value as an Avenger (Issues #162, #167, and #211 for example). As an alternative to being a superhero, Simon Williams has lately started to pursue an acting career (Issue #181). Though he has not exactly been landing choice roles at this early stage of his career (witness the Mr. Muscles episode from Issue #194), a little more self-confidence could make him the Tom Selleck of the superhero set. (Aside from his eyes, he certainly has the looks for it.)

We have seen that the Vision and Wonder Man are of a single mind, if not a single identity or set of memories. If they have anything in common, it is that each of them has had some difficulty in finding a niche among his fellow Avengers.

'In the changing identities and uncertain fortunes of these heroes who call themselves the Avengers, we find a metaphor for the condition of our own lives.'

This brings us to the chameleonic Henry Pym. In *The Avengers* #58, it was Dr. Pym (as Goliath) who put aside the Vision's misgivings about joining the Avengers: "We ask only a man's worth, not the accident of his condition." What are we to make of the condition of this most changeable superhero? During his career, Dr. Pym has had four identities and even more costumes. He has had two apparent mental breakdowns; the first, which disorganized his personality and caused him to become Yellowjacket (Issues #59 and #60) was the result of a lab accident; the second, as we noted earlier, was caused by Ultron (Issues #161 and #162)

For years, Henry Pym was saddled with inhibitions that prevented him from expression his feelings towards the Wasp. His transformation into Yellowjacket released the uninhibited, outgoing, aggressive part of his nature, and it was only this way that he could propose to the Wasp and marry her (In this schizophrenic episode, he had convinced himself that his Yellowjacket identity had done away with Goliath, but the Wasp knew the truth about Yellowjacket almost from the start.)

We should also understand that Pym was never really comfortable in the role of a superhero and often vacillated between heroics and scientific research. Issue #152 is one of several stories in which he has expressed this feeling of unease. It is also quite possible that Pym has felt "outclassed" by the more impressive powers of some of the other Avengers such as Iron Man and Thor. (See Issue #213.)

In recent months, Yellowjacket's problems have come to a head. Because of his lapses of judgement during the "Elfqueen" episode (issue #212), he has actually been court-martialled by the team (issue #213). He began to reject the Wasp and even hit her when she discovered his plan to program a robot to attack the Avengers so that he could "defeat" it and "prove himself" to the team. It was becoming obvious that Yellowjacket was being consumed by irrationality and frustration. Finally, after his robot nearly killed the Avengers (ironically, it was the Wasp who stopped it), he left the team in disgrace.

Yellowjacket's life has become a steady slide into desperation. Torn by feelings of inadequacy as both a super-hero *and* as a scientist, he began to grope for a means of redeeming himself, only to be duped by his old foe, Egghead into fitting Egghead's niece, Trish Starr, with an explosive prosthetic arm. Under the threat that Egghead would blow Trish to pieces if Yellowjacket did not cooperate, the ex-Avenger did the villain's dirty work and invaded Strategic Air Command headquarters to steal the resins of the super-strong metal adamantium. However, the Avengers stopped him (the telling blow was delivered by the Wasp herself) and Egghead covered his tracks by programming false memories into Trish's mind, making her believe this was all Yellowjacket's doing. Henry Pym is now in jail and the final fate of this fallen, disgraced superhero will no doubt be a matter for upcoming *Avengers* stories. The complete story of how Yellowjacket came to be in this present situtaion is in issue #217

As Henry Pym changed identities, other characters took up the identities he left behind. Shortly after he first became Yellowjacket, another Avenger took on the powers and identity of Goliath, as Hawkeye (Clint Barton) took some of Pym's growth serum and donned a distinctly different costume—becoming, in effect, "Goliath II" (Issue #63). By the time Hawkeye went back to being Hawkeye, one of Pym's colleagues, a black scientist named Bill Foster, had taken some of the serum and become Black Goliath (*Power Man* #25)—again with a different costume than those that Pym had worn. In *Marvel Two-In-One* #55, Black Goliath adopted still another new costume, but started using an even older name: Giant-Man. And *Marvel Premiere* #47 saw the super-hero debut of Scott Lang, an ex-convict in the employ of Tony Stark, who supplies the Avengers with their mansion headquarters and much of their equipment (and who, as we all know, is an Avenger himself as Iron Man). Scott has taken up the orginal costume and powers of Henry Pym, becoming the new Ant-Man. In issues #195 and #196, the new Ant-Man helped the Avengers battle the Taskmaster, but he has yet to become a full-fledged member of the team.

Finally, we have the Wasp and Jocasta. There is a certain irony to the Wasp The general impression of her over the years has been that she is immature, frivolous, and flighty, always distracted by trivial things (such as her penchant for noticing handsome men) even at the most critical moments She is independently wealthy—an heiress, in fact—and spends much of her time amidst Manhattan's high society. She is extrememly fashion-conscious and changes costumes literally every time the storyline in *The Avengers* changes, or whenever she guest-stars in another book. The Wasp holds the all-time record for the largest number of costumes ever worn by a comic-book character. The Wasp has worn more than thirty outfits, some of which have been variations on previous designs. (A list of most of the costumes the Wasp has worn, and the issues in which she wore them, is on the letters page of *The Avengers* #213.) The irony of the Wasp is that she has proven to be a more effective and capable Avenger than the man she married (and from whom she actually gained her powers in *Tales to Astonish* #44). This supposedly silly and air-headed heroine has lately taken responsibility for *leading* the team in the wake of her divorce. (Issue #217.)

As for Jocasta, when Ultron re-awakened his robot "bride" and summoned her to him (issue #170), the Avengers—and the Wasp in particular—were horrified that Jocasta's voice is an electronic reproduction of Janet Van Dyne's. This comes as no surprise, as Jocasta was created to "be" Jan and to become Ultron's mate. How much like Jan is Jocasta? On some occasions, she has displayed the same flippant nature as the Wasp (such as when she baited the Taskmaster in issue #196), but in general, Jocasta has always been quieter and more subdued than her "template." From this we may conclude that Jocasta exhibits personality traits that the Wasp does not ordinarily show. Remember that the Wasp has not been without her more serious moments, these have usually occurred when she has had problems with her husband. (As in issues #161 #162, #213 and #217.)

Since she left Ultron for the Avengers, Jocasta's fondest wish has been to be accepted by them. She wants a sense of companionship and belonging, and has tried especially to reach out to the Vision, with whom she has some things in common (issues #194 and #211). For a time, it appeared that Jocasta was on her way to official Avenger status (Captain America nominated her for membership is issue #196), but as time went on, the full-fledged Avengers continued to overlook and ignore her—unintentionally, to be sure. By the time the team had its last major membership drive, Jocasta was despairing that she would never gain acceptance, and left the group without so much as a parting word (issue #211). Ironically, the Avengers had wanted her for "substitute status" and would have asked her to remain in residence at Avengers' Mansion to pinch hit for members who were unavailable. The last chapter in the chronicle of Jocasta has yet to be written. Only time will tell what is in store for her

The Vision, Wonder Man, Yellowjacket, the Wasp and Jocasta. What is common to most of these characters is a sense of alienation (the gregarious Wasp is the exception to this rule) Whether brought on by extreme differences between the individual and those around him, or by some loss or lack of self-esteem, or by some other malaise, alienation is one of the saddest, most crippling afflictions of the spirit. The alienated person finds himself estranged from those who should be closest to him He comes to question the value of his life, and the purpose of living at all. "Who am I? *Why* am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?" The experiences of these characters reflect questions that each of us asks at some time in his life. In the changing identities and uncertain fortunes of these heroes who call themselves Avengers, we find a metaphor for the condition of our own lives.

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The Justice League

by Rich Morrissey

When DC Comics' *Justice League of America* soared to success in 1960, it soon caught the attention of Martin Goodman, the publisher of Marvel Comics at the time. He suggested to writer/editor Stan Lee that he develop a similar title for Marvel, which at the time was publishing only supernatural and Western titles. As a result, Lee and artist/co-plotter Jack Kirby were unable to put together a team of pre-existing heroes like the Justice League—if they wanted a team of super-heroes, they had to create new ones. So they did follow the JLA's lead of taking the name and powers *for one* of the new team (The Human Torch) from a successful hero of the 1940's, but fell back on their own innovative imaginations for the rest of the group. And thus was created the *Fantastic Four*, whose tremendous success brought Marvel permanently back into the super-hero field, and laid the foundation for a following that rivalled and ultimately exceeded that of the DC heroes and team that had provided the original inspiration.

By 1963, Marvel had several regular super-hero series running in its previously all-supernatural titles—Thor in *Journey Into Mystery*, Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense*, and Ant-Man (with the Wasp) in *Tales to Astonish*. It clearly occurred to Goodman, Lee and Kirby that it was now possible to do what had been impossible in 1961: create a team consisting of its most popular solo stars. Although the *Fantastic Four* was still doing well—and, indeed, had spun off one of its members, the Human Torch, into his own solo series in *Strange Tales*—a team of heroes with their own followings could capture at once the audiences of those characters as the JLA had—and, conversely, introduce fans of the group to the solo strips of its members.

And yet, although the *Mighty Avengers* (as the group was originally called, although the adjective quickly vanished from the title) was clearly inspired by the JLA, certain differences were apparent from the very beginning. Although Thor, Iron Man, Ant-Man and the Wasp were members of the group from the beginning, several other Marvel solo stars were not. To be sure, the Human Torch was already in the Fantastic Four, and Dr. Strange was only a short backup character at the time (and the Justice League, after all, had also neglected a few backup characters like Congorilla) but Spider-Man was the star of his own book, already well on his way to the position he was to hold for many years as Marvel's most popular character. His presence in the Avengers could have been a great sales asset to both books—but it was not to be until years later that he was even considered for membership, and then he was rejected. His absence may have been due to the fact that he (like Dr. Strange) was drawn in his own feature by Steve Ditko, making his appearance not very compatible with a team originally drawn and later laid out by Jack Kirby, or to his personality and situation, which (again like Dr. Strange's) made team membership impractical for him. Probably both factors played a part, but their very consideration—even in the face of the same popularity Superman and Batman brought to the JLA—showed at once how different a team the Avengers would be.

An even more significant portent of the team's future direction was the inclusion and abrupt departure of the fifth charter member. Although the Hulk had his own magazine for a short time, he quickly lost it—which, at DC, would at once have disqualified him from JLA membership, as it had kept Hawkman out of the group until he received a permanent feature in 1964. But not only was the Hulk one of the founding members of the Avengers, but he *left* the group in the very next issue—another almost unheard of occurrence in DC groups at the time (and still extremely rare there—which is why DC groups tend to have so many more members than do Marvel groups). Indeed, after the first issue no new Avenger was *ever* to be admitted who had his or her own feature at the time. Nor, with the sole exceptions of Captain America and the soon-departed Hulk, did any later addition to the group find great success in a subsequent solo feature—and only in a few cases, as with the Black Widow and the Black Panther, were such features even attempted. By *Avengers* #16, in which the four remaining charter members were replaced by Hawkeye, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch (all recently-reformed villains who had never been any sort of solo stars) the concept of the team had moved almost entirely away from the Justice League concept of a group of a company's "superstars" to the Fantastic Four concept of a group of super-heroes who fit together well and interacted in interesting ways. Although Captain America remained as leader, and it didn't take long for Thor and Iron Man to resume semi-active and finally fully active status as Avengers, these three were never again to be the core of the Avengers, as DC's "big guns" like Superman, Batman and the Flash were the core of the Justice League. Lee and Kirby, it seemed, had their own ideas as to what constituted a successful super-team—ideas that didn't always agree with DC's or Martin Goodman's, but which they continued to follow as long as they met with critical and popular success.

But despite the lack of similarity between the Avengers and the Justice League in general, there were some specific resemblances, especially between individual members, that were undeniable. In most cases (e.g., Quicksilver and the Flash, the Scarlet Witch and Zatanna) the resemblances were superficial and largely limited to the powers of the two characters—understandable in the light of the relatively limited range and extent of possible super-powers. However, on occasion such similarities became far more pronounced—particularly in two cases.

Green Arrow and Hawkeye are both blond archers, and both are supreme in their field, hot-tempered and often reckless, but more intelligent than they appear at first glance. This side of their personalities developed gradually in both cases, but once it did both Green Arrow and Hawkeye often found it difficult to get along with their fellow Justice Leaguers and Avengers respectively. In particular, each had running arguments with another member in particular (Hawkman (!) and Captain America), although in each case the arguments were eventually replaced by a closer friendship than usual. Moreover, both archers had stormy romances with older (presumably, even though neither *looked* it physically), widowed super-heroines—the Black Widow and the Black Canary, who are themselves similar in powers (both are primarily judo experts) and costumes as well as names.

Yet all these similarities developed only gradually, and most likely not without some mutual influence. Green Arrow was first by over two decades, and probably was at least a partial inspiration for Hawkeye—if only because Jack Kirby, who had a hand in the creation of almost every Marvel character of the 1960's, had been Green Arrow's regular artist for a short time before leaving DC for Marvel. Still, aside from both being blond archers, Oliver Queen and Clint Barton at first were almost poles apart—one was a millionaire playboy who dabbled in crimefighting almost as a hobby, and the other was a sideshow archer whose original hopes of becoming a "big-time" super-hero were temporarily frustrated, leading him down the road of crime.

Not until Hawkeye had been an Avenger for some time did Green Arrow's personality begin to take its present form—and in this case there was probably some influence in the other direction. The change was largely the work of then-JLA scripter Denny O'Neil, who had in turn worked as an assistant editor at Marvel before coming to DC, and it's hard to image that thoughts of Hawkeye didn't cross O'Neil's mind—but the development was also a logical one in a more general way. Even if the Avengers had *not* included a hot-tempered archer, it—like all Marvel groups—relied heavily on character interaction and development. O'Neil naturally hoped to bring these assets to the JLA, and—as Stan Lee had quickly discovered—this was most easily done with group members who appeared solely in the group, having no solo titles to complicate matters. Green Arrow, having lost his solo strip several years before, was therefore the JLA member most open for personality development—and his new temper and social conscience, though present in a number of other Marvel characters besides Hawkeye, were unusual enough at DC to provide an interesting contrast with the other, calmer members of the JLA. His sudden financial reversal was a reasonable explanation for his personality change, and even his romance with Black Canary was a logical development between a long-unattached JLA member and a recently-widowed new member of the group. Although undeniably similiar to Hawkeye's, Green Arrow's position in the Justice League was actually even closer to that of Ant-Man/Giant Man in the Avengers, who also found himself playing a more and more important role in the group after he lost (and never regained) his solo feature

An even more striking parallel exists between the Vision and the Red Tornado. Both are androids created by villains (Ultron and Thomas O. Morrow respectively) to infiltrate their respective super-groups and destroy them from within, but both overcame their original programming and became regular members. Both were named after 1940's heroes (with whom neither has anything else in common) and both have red faces and figures (though the Red Tornado's are a costume and mask, while the Vision's red coloring is that of his artificial body). And, as they made their debuts mere months apart (the Red Tornado first appeared in a book cover-dated August, 1968, while the Vision's first appearance was dated October, 1968) it's no wonder that they're often cited as the most blatant example of cross-influence between the two groups.

Moreover, the two heroes continued to develop along parallel courses in many ways. Each one, it developed, had an actual background involving characters predating their supposed creations: the Vision possessed the brain patterns of the then-apparently-deceased Wonder Man and had the android body of the original Human Torch, while the Red Tornado incorporated the mind and powers of the heroic tornado-being Ulthoon. Furthermore, both androids have overcome great obstacles and achieved successful family lives: the Vision by courting and eventually marrying his teammate, the Scarlet Witch, and the Red Tornado by establishing a lasting relationship with social worker Kathy Sutton and adopting a young Vietnamese orphan

But despite all the similarities, the Red Tornado and the Vision were at first nothing more than an example of two independent creators thinking along parallel lines—and not, at first, as parallel as they later became. When Roy Thomas created the Vision, he intended him as an Avenger from the very beginning—but Gardner Fox created the Red Tornado not for the Justice League but for the Justice *Society*; a group dating back to the 1940 s who at the time appeared primarily as annual guest-stars in the Justice League's title. A character restricted to a single continued story a year was obviously limited in potential importance, but Denny O'Neil played him up heavily whenever he used the Justice Society—and Len Wein was even more interested in the DC android, moving him into the League itself. Both writers, well-grounded in the Marvel material, saw him as a character with a well-developed personality—but one who, like Green Arrow, could be developed even further without a great deal of worry about previous or current character development elsewhere.

The Vision, on the other hand, was a powerful presence in the Avengers from the moment he first appeared. He had a logical mind and unruffled personality that was especially invaluable in moments of stress, and his calm, flat dialogue (symbolized by square, tinted speech balloons) and high intelligence heightened his similarity to Mr. Spock of *Star Trek*. Also like Spock, the Vision quickly became the most popular member of the Avengers, whose figure was used in the corner of the covers to identify the book at once. (A fan with a preference to DC once wondered in print why the Vision had never been considered for his own title. It was a fair question, but Roger Stern pointed out that in Marvel teams the most valuable members usually do *not* appear else-

...That Wasn't

where, for reasons previously discussed.) The Vision also had much of the appeal to women that Spock did, not only in the Avengers (where Mantis, as well as the Scarlet Witch, was greatly attracted to him), but in fandom as well.

Nobody could have confused him with the Red Tornado, who was shy, unsure of himself (especially at first, when he was trying to free himself of the clumsiness T.O. Morrow had deliberately programmed into him to demoralize the Justice Society), and kept in the background as much as possible. He was never anything like as strong a presence as the Vision, and was temporarily killed off not once but twice (under similar circumstances both times, as if the writers and editors didn't even care how to get rid of him as long as they did) with little fanfare. Even the meaning of "android" was often ambiguous and seemingly different in the two cases. The classical definition of the term in science fiction is in reference to a synthetic but still human individual—as distinguished from a robot, generally considered to be a machine (usually metallic) that can perform human functions and often think. Neither term is entirely precise, however—indeed, the very first use of the term "robot" (from a Czech word for "worker" in Karel Capek's play *R.U.R.*) was for android-like beings human enough to mate and have children. On the other hand, "android," which comes from Greek words meaning "man-like," is often used for robots that, though metallic, look like or even have the general form of men (as opposed to, say, intelligent computing machines or robotic vehicles). Indeed, in the *Star Wars* movies, George Lucas has even used the abbreviated term "droid" not only for robots like C-3PO (who at least has the *form* of a human being) but for those like R2-D2, who look nothing like humans.

So, although both the Vision and the Red Tornado clearly qualify as androids (both have the outward appearance of men) under one definition, the Red Tornado, from what has been shown of his metallic inner workings, might more properly be considered a robot. The Vision, on the other hand, is a "synthezoid"—a being stated on his first appearance to have everything a man has, only synthetic. He has the ability to eat (though no need; he can live indefinitely on solar energy), to fall in love, and presumably to consummate his marriage, if not to father a child. Few of these are abilities the robot Ultron would give his creation, but all were built into the original Human Torch by Phineas T. Horton, who had other things in mind for his android. T.O. Morrow intended little more than a distraction for the Justice Society when he created the Red Tornado, and had no knowledge of Ulthoon's incorporation into his robot body.

We thus have the apparent paradox of a once-very-humanlike android with the added brain patterns of an actual human being (the Vision) acting like a cold, logical machine, while a very nonhuman alien in a robot body (the Red Tornado) has developed some very evident human emotions. Of course the Vision is far from emotionless, but, again like Spock, he tends to suppress those emotions—to a lesser extent now than before, but to a large extent it's helped him develop a strong and mature personality as a strong Avenger and protective husband. The Red Tornado, with his shyer manner and history of ineptitude, has developed in an equally-reasonable but ultimately less prominent manner; he is a devoted adoptive father and has dated (but not yet married) a dominant woman. Again, the paradox is due to the respective creators of the two heroes—the Vision is not a machine but was created by one, and much of his personality was shaped by Ultron's contempt for humanity and all things human. The Red Tornado's creator, though evil, was a human being and knew the Tornado himself must at least be able to pass for one—and thus we have a synthetic human assembled by a machine and an alien mind in a machine assembled by an evil, probably mad human both striving toward, and gradually attaining, the noblest aspects of humanity: friendship, respect and love.

And no doubt a good deal of the resemblance between the two teams is due to the influence they and all comics have on each other—the increased friendship and camaraderie existing in the comic book field, even among employees of different companies. Clearly the increasing mobility between companies is also a factor; we have already seen how the Marvel experience of Denny O'Neil and others, and the DC experience of Jack Kirby and others, influenced their work on the Justice League and Avengers. And yet there are surprisingly few people who have worked on both titles: only four artists (George Tuska, George Perez, Don Heck, and very, briefly, Neal Adams—not at all odd, especially when considered in the light of the relatively small number of artists willing to draw a story with a lot of costumed characters) and only two writers, Steve Englehart and Gerry Conway. Although all the JLA writers to date (except Cary Bates, who did only a handful of stories) have also written for Marvel, and all the Avengers writers (except Stan Lee, who co-plotted his stories with past and future DC artist Jack Kirby, and Bill Mantlo, who again did very few stories) have worked for DC, there has been no further overlap between the two titles. Nevertheless, the cross-influence has been very strong on a number of occasions.

In the case of the Vision and the Red Tornado, for instance, creators Roy Thomas and Gardner Fox had a friendship and correspondence dating back to the days when Fox wrote the Justice Society of America in its own feature and Thomas was an eager young reader. I doubt there was any deliberate imitation in either direction, especially as the Red Tornado, like Green Arrow, was not greatly developed until Fox left the JLA. But other parallels were often evident, especially on Thomas' part; as a fan he'd often said the *Justice League* was his favorite title, and Fox even named a devoted JLA fan in a story, Jerry Thomas, after Roy (and his friend Jerry Bails).

After becoming the regular writer on the Avengers, Thomas continued and expanded on Stan Lee's direction much more than Gardner Fox's. But every so often he would toss in a reference to the DC team, ranging from brief one-liners ("Nobody knows me," Hawkeye would think. "Maybe I should paint all my arrows the same color or something?") to two full-fledged pastiches. In the course of a contest between the recurring Avengers villain, Kang the Conqueror, and the alien Grandmaster, the Avengers were pitted against several other groups—among them the Squadron Sinister. The Squadron Sinister consisted of four men selected by the Grandmaster and given powers and costumes remarkably reminiscent of the four most eminent members of the Justice League—almost as if the intergalactic gamesman were familiar with the DC universe and considered it appropriate to create a Marvel-universe equivalent. Although largely a private joke on Thomas' part, so strong were the original concepts the Squadron parodied that two of its members—Hyperion and Nighthawk, who parallelled Superman and Batman respectively—later metamorphosed into Marvel heroes in their own right.

Very shortly thereafter, Thomas carried his parody a step further and introduced the Squadron Supreme. *This* squadron included its own versions of the Sinister ones, Hyperion, Nighthawk, the Whizzer and Dr. Spectrum—but also had counterparts of the rest of the Justice League and, like the League, was a group of super-heroes. Thomas may well have been paying further tribute to DC (aside from the obvious goal of not crowding the Marvel Universe any further) by placing the Squadron Supreme on an Earth parallel to its mainstream one, as DC has done with the Justice Society and other supergroups of its own. In this story, several Avengers fought and later teamed up with the Squadron Supreme to defeat a mutant child who threatened to destroy the Squadron's Earth.

Years later, the Squadron Supreme made its final appearance in an Avengers story scripted by Steve Engelhart. The multi-issue story was packed with far more DC parody/pastiche than Roy Thomas ever dreamed of outside the pages of *Not Brand Ecchh*, some of it open to question (Nelson Rockefeller as President of the Squadron Supreme's United States *could* have been an oblique reference to DC's location at 75 Rockefeller Plaza, but more likely reflected the Rockefeller family's association with the type of large corporate cartel Englehart was then using as chief villain). Most, however, was clear-cut and right on target—parodying everything from the JLA's satellite headquarters, to DC's fictitious cities and villains (just as Superman had often battled Lex Luthor, so Hyperion's arch-foe was Emil Burbank) to the actual DC plotting and production style. One Squadron member pointed out that "When we win, we *win*—there aren't any loose ends!" and one issue was laid out as if it were the Squadron Supreme's own title—complete with JLA-style faces down the sides of the splash page, and individual heroes' logos heading chapters in which they appeared. It was perhaps the best and most direct comparison of the two teams yet to appear, although understandably weighted in favor of the Marvel group.

For its part, the Justice League met an unnamed group of super-heroes from the planet Angor in the 87th issue of its magazine. Wandjuna, the Silver Sorceress, Blue Jay, and Jack B. Quick had a not-so-coincidental resemblance to the Avengers of the time, but were not a particularly clever pastiche. Aside from their appearance and powers, the Avengers parodies seemed limited to the name of their planet, and perhaps the way they (and the JLA) assumed each other to be enemies and started fighting, in the manner of all too many Marvel characters on their first meeting. Even this may not have been intended as parody, but as a serious attempt (like many others at DC) to capture the Marvel style. It seems unfortunate that writer Mike Friedrich, like all too many of today's writers, was too impressed with Marvel's many undeniable strengths to see the line's weaknesses as well as a skilled parodist should.

Ironically, the strengths and weaknesses of the two teams' methods of approach were perceived much more closely by Steve Englehart, who left the *Avengers* and Marvel very soon after his Squadron Supreme serial to write the actual JLA for DC. (He also began writing the Batman stories in *Detective Comics* at the same time—another character he had done a pastiche of in his last days at Marvel, when he introduced the Shroud in *Super-Villain Team-Up*. Unlike either version of Nighthawk, however, the Shroud also incorporated elements of other classic pulp and comic book heroes, such as the Oriental scholarship of the Shadow and the blindness and heightened other senses of Daredevil.) In his first published JLA story, Englehart spoke through a South American character appropriately named Esteban Corazon: "You were like people from another world. . .to even burlesque when our patriotism needed pump-priming!. . .I believe in you now!"

And believe he did. He brought to the JLA in his single year of stories much of the same intricate plotting, careful continuity, and detailed characterization that he had brought to the Avengers for several years, but without forgetting that the Justice League was a different sort of group: less of a family and more of a professional society. I've often wished he could have done a more detailed story with Friedrich's Angorians as a counterpoint to his use of Thomas' Squadron Supreme, but what he did do was even more interesting in many ways. In one story he even introduced the first *actual* Avengers/Justice League crossover in the person of Willow, a previously-unknown "returnee" to Earth whose costume, history and manner of speaking were those of the recently-departed Avenger, Mantis. (Yet somehow the villainous mechanical "Construct" remembered her from before; probably the Construct was capable of receiving broadcasts from Earths parallel to the JLA's Earth-One.)

Englehart was also responsible for the Red Tornado's resurrection and return to the JLA ranks, as well as for Hawkgirl's long-overdue invitation to full JLA membership alongside her husband, Hawkman. But, although his Avengers experience may have given him a predilection for androids and married couples in groups, he continued, and did much to further develop the Tornado's characterization in its own direction.

So did Englehart's successor, Gerry Conway, who also came to the JLA fresh from being the Avengers' regular writer—and who continues to write the DC group's adventures to this day. It was he who finally revealed the inside story of Red Tornado's construction, and the connection with Ulthoon—as Steve Englehart had revealed the Vision's own convoluted history several years before. (But in a final unintentional Vision/Red Tornado parallel, both Englehart and Conway were following the suggestions of others in writing their respective origins. The Vision's history had been largely plotted out by his creator, Roy Thomas, now a writer and editor at DC—while Ulthoon's connection with the Red Tornado had originally been a suggestion of Mark Gruenwald, now a writer and editor at Marvel. Shifting staff makes itself felt once more. . .)

Nor has the influence, even in recent years, been entirely from the Avengers to the Justice League. On his recent return to scripting the Avengers, Jim Shooter startled many fans by announcing his intention of "getting back to the original (JLA-inspired) concept of the book—a team spotlighting heroes who have their own books." Sure enough, in the space of a single issue four of the most beloved Avengers—the Vision, the Scarlet Witch, the Beast, and Wonder Man—were sent packing, along with the robot Jocasta. The team seemed to be moving closer to the Justice League than it had ever been since the early (pre-#16) issues.

At first, Shooter's motives seemed incomprehensible. Although he had started his writing career at DC, he had always expressed a personal preference for the Marvel style and tradition. Moreover, his work at DC had been largely on the Legion of Super-Heroes—a team which, like the Avengers, consisted largely of members who appeared nowhere else. Nevertheless, Shooter had generally given an important role to Superboy, the one full-time Legionnaire who *did* appear elsewhere—and although a good deal of it was at editorial direction, he had also stated that he found Superboy to be the most interesting and fully-developed of the Legionnaires.

And, it seemed, he felt the same way about the Avengers. "There's a reason," he remarked in private conversation, "why Iron Man has his own book and the Vision doesn't." He responded to further queries about keeping consistent in dealing with characters whose personalities and private lives are in other hands by admitting that "that's always been a difficulty at DC—but I don't think Marvel has to worry that much about it."

All of which is open to question. As previously mentioned, one reason the Vision never received his own book *was* that he was so important to the Avengers. (Indeed, now that he and the Scarlet Witch *are* out, a title featuring the Vision and his wife *has* been announced as a limited-run series.) And Marvel had little of DC's difficulty with consistency, especially in its early days, because Stan Lee had some plotting input into the entire line—significantly, the Avengers began to focus on a unique roster at the same time Lee was delegating an increasing number of writing assignments to others. Even in more recent times, the most successful spotlighting of solo stars in the Avengers occurred when the Avengers' writer handled a hero's solo strip as well, as Steve Englehart did with Captain America. Shooter, on the other hand, had no connection with the *Captain America*, *Iron Man* or *Thor* titles, except as Editor-in-Chief of the entire line.

Even so, Shooter quickly demonstrated that he was in no danger of losing track of the Avengers' basic strengths. Although he did give increased emphasis to the three solo stars, he continued to draw his other characters from those who could appear, at least for the duration, exclusively with the Avengers. Although he'd originally dropped those Avengers (except for the Wasp) who didn't have their own books, he went on to admit Tigra and the She-Hulk, and readmit Yellowjacket and Hawkeye, none of whom had their own books at the time—and, although neither Tigra nor Yellowjacket stayed long, their departure from the group and all-too-brief experiences in it proved more memorable than anything the "Big Three" did. *The Avengers* continues to be a book about a close-knit group of people who care about each other—who have certain conflicts, but also a group spirit that continues on and on in the face of adversity.

And the Justice League of America carries on, too—but it is and always will be a group whose members maintain a greater distance from one another; people who associate with one another more for professional than for personal reasons. It has its own merits, and a definite place in the history of comic books, but not the least of its achievements is that it inspired not one but two other groups, the Fantastic Four and the Avengers, who carried its original concept in totally new directions.

Rich Morrissey writes for The Comics Journal.

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The Avengers
and the
Marvel Universe

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by Bill Townsend

As hard as it is to believe, the "Marvel Universe" is more than twenty years old,and before too long the *Avengers* themselves will be celebrating their twentieth anniversary as well. One has to ask oneself: how can such craziness have lasted for so long? The answer is: because it *had* to. In fact, without the Avengers, there really wouldn't be much of a Marvel Universe at all. In each Marvel magazine, with the obvious exception of the team-up mags, it is fairly easy to pretend that our hero, whoever he or she may be, is the only superhero on the face of the earth. Many writers prefer it that way. Frank Miller, writer and artist for *Daredevil* says that a superhero group is just "too many absurdities to tackle before breakfast."

This may be so, but they are absurdities that have to be tackled. Left to themselves, the heroes that make up the Marvel Universe would almost never meet. For instance, Thor and the Hulk have been with Marvel since the beginning, but have only met each other three times outside of the Avengers (*Thor* #112, *Defenders,* and *Hulk* #255). Twice in twenty years!

Each important Marvel character is an aspect of the human character writ large. Thor is a representative of the knightly virtues: honor, courage, chastity Iron Man emphasizes the frailty of the human condition, being only a human in a suit of armor, subject to human weaknesses like heart attacks and alcoholism. It's fairly obvious what Captain America stands for. In their own magazines they meet only tangentially. But in the Avengers, these separate pieces come together, and only then do we truly have a Marvel universe.

And, if you want absurdity, all you have to do is check out the recent *Contest of Champions,* where you are faced with an auditorium of brighly costumed, super-powered people. Compared with that, the Avengers is as sober as a stockholders' meeting.

It really depends on the wit and skill of the writer involved, and the expressiveness and ability of the artist involved to make the Avengers, and thus the Marvel Universe work. Nobody must realize this more than Jim Shooter. It is probably no coincidence that he is Editor-in Chief as well as the writer for the Avengers.

Shooter had, in fact, just been named Editor-in-Chief, when he decided to put his abilities to the supreme test. He would write an eleven-part Avengers epic that would involve nearly every Avenger, past and present, and add on a few more besides. This covered *Avengers* #167 to #177, also known as "The Avengers vs. Korvac."

It certainly was an ambitious undertaking, and it should be considered a small triumph that Shooter was able to pull it off at all. While the story itself is interesting, and the overall dramatic effect stunning, there are many large flaws.

The largest of these is Korvac (. . .or Michael, or The Enemy) himself. What is he really after? Supposedly he is trying to save the universe from the whims of Chaos, but is this really possible? The dichotomy between Order and Chaos has always seemed to me to be a false one. There is no such thing as Chaos, really, only an order too complex for human understanding. As mankind learns more, less and less appears chaotic. In truth, "Destiny" (whatever that is) does rule the world, but the forces that determine it are so complex and varied that it appears random. It is like trying to save someone from the Bogeyman; it just doesn't exist.

Korvac, despite his good intentions, seems bound to cause nothing but destruction, (see *What If. . .?* #32) so why all the weeping and wailing at the end? The ending, where we are left to contemplate the Avengers as villains, is something of a cheat.

The relationship between Korvac and Carina, another pivotal point of the story, doesn't seem to work too well either. Love between two cosmic entities, I suppose, must be a difficult thing to make believable.

The art on the stories varied from issue to issue, breaking up the continuity somewhat. I would have liked to have seen George Perez do the whole thing, but Dave Wentzel did an adequate job on most of the issues.

There were, however, many fine points that made the series quite enjoyable. For instance, in 167, there was a fight between Iron Man and Captain America, where Cap calls Shellhead a 'Tin-Plated mercenary' and Iron Man responds by calling the Living Legend 'flag-face'.

As far as continuity goes, the story comes up all aces. One can see, visibly, the pressures mounting on Iron Man, as Chairman of the Avengers, and these pressures increasingly cause him to turn to the bottle, in his own magazine. It is almost funny how Shooter handles Thor. He has the Collector yank Thor out

of whatever battle he is in the middle of in his own magazine, send him in to help the Avengers, and then send him back again, with no memory of having been with the Avengers. Such nerve that Collector has! Who does he think he is, an editor or something?

With issue #178 an almost dizzying change of focus takes place. We move from the cosmic to the mundane, and from more than two dozen main characters to only one, the Beast. This story, written by Steve Gerber, is more effective and tightly-knit than the Korvac story, but then again, it is much less ambitious. The story is absorbing, we get to know the Beast a little better, and an interesting new villain, the Manipulator, is introduced. The issue is full of great lines like: Beast to Captain America: "Aw, go pledge allegience, will ya?" This is one of my favorite one-issue stories.

From issues #181 to #199 we have a set of really fine issues. We have complex, superior stories from David Micheline, and breathtaking art from John Byrne and George Perez. There is a nice continuity between all the stories, but there is no way that they could be called an "epic"

Avengers #181 is one of my personal favorites, because it is so full of delicious irony. there are just TOO MANY AVENGERS! There is hardly room to fit them all on the cover! So, the Government demands that they limit their membership. The crowd that Shooter brought together to battle Korvac fills the meeting room. The scene where Peter Grynch (ha!), the ultimate bureaucrat, is dictating to a room full of surly superheroes is just delightful. The crowning touch is when we focus on Hawkeye's outraged face when Grynch reads who the seventh, and final Avenger is. "and . . . The Falcon!" "The—WHAT!?" Hawkeye shouts, furious. Too much

Almost all the issues in this series are as enjoyable. They can be serious without being heavy, and a light touch is maintained throughout. Especially noteworthy are issues #185 and #186 where we uncover the mysterious backgrounds of Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, and make a surprising discovery about their parentage. They don't say what it is outright, and I'm not going to let the cat out of the bag myself. It should be enough to say that it's something that someone who reads the X-Men and the Avengers shouldn't have too much trouble figuring out.

John Byrne and George Perez seem to excel at handling groups of superheroes. Byrne seems to have an instinctive feel for facial expressions and postures that convey emotion and reveal character. Compared to Byrne, Perez' figures seem rather cold, but his backgrounds are awesome, and his layouts are more imaginative.

In issues #195-196 we get the answer to something that has always bothered me in the back of my mind. We meet Taskmaster, who trains thugs for use by other supervillains. "I always did wonder where all those faceless lackeys came from!" says Scott Lang, the Ant-Man.

Again, several nice points. *On an applicant to this* "academy": "This one'll never do. His I.Q.'s way too high. Almost normal. . ." Cute.

With issues #197 to #200 we come to the sad case of Ms. Marvel.

Earlier I mentioned how certain characters in the Marvel Universe stand for certain qualities. If a particular character really has no qualites or if these qualities have no appeal, the book will fold. For instance, *Master of Kung-Fu* might just be another martial arts comic book, but it is the moodiness and philosophical attitude of Shang-Chi himself that has caused that book to have passed its 100th issue.

Ms. Marvel, a genuinely strong, aggressive woman was an interesting concept. However, it was also a scary one, since that vast majority of comic book readers are male. Instead, they prefer someone more mysterious and yielding, like Spider-Woman, the "dark angel." But Ms. Marvel was different. Said Wonder-Man in issue #173: "she doesn't just strike a pose and point like Wanda or the Wasp, she hauls off and belts people—like a man would." Exactly.

So, Ms. Marvel lost her own book. She went on to join the Avengers, first appearing in issue #172, and joining permanently in #183. But suddenly the Seventies were over and the Eighties had begun. the *London Times* had called the term Ms. "an anachronism." Now, it seemed an *embarrassment* to have a feminist character. It was Carol Danvers, not Simon Williams who was out of step with the times.

So, Ms. Marvel had to go. And the deed was done in the most degrading way possible. Marcus, Immortus' little boy, is trapped in limbo, and what better vessel to escape with than the body of Ms. Marvel? So, he wisks here into Limbo, seduces her "with a subtle boost from Immortus' machines," and impregnates her—with himself. Symbolic, No?

Of course, Ms. Marvel's pregnancy is revealed right after she delivers a particularly self-righteous tirade to Wanda about the stereotype of motherhood. David Micheline uses his skill at irony to nasty effect here

The upshot is that Marcus is "born" into our demension, grows up in a day, and Carol Danvers, Ms. Marvel, decides to give it all up for the man of her dreams and disappear back to limbo with him.

Yes, it stinks to high heaven. Dirty pool, fellas.

Call in Chris Claremont and Avengers annual #10 to the rescue. Recently I have not been too thrilled with Claremont's stories in other magazines, but the story in *Avengers Annual* #10 was excellent, Mike Golden's art was superb. And besides, the story needed to be written

Of course, Carol Danvers was Ms. Marvel no longer. Like women warriors of myth, once taken by a man, she loses her magic. She is now only Carol Danvers, who is somewhat bitter (who could blame her?), and who Claremont has put in the care of his own X-Men.

Not before, however, she lets loose some righteous rage on the heads of the Avengers, who let her be carried off like that. I can't help but think that her outburst is partially directed at the writers who condemned her to limbo as well

After issue #200, the stories in the Avengers were a little uneven and mainly mediocre, as if they were just marking time for when Jim Shooter would return to take over the book again. George Perez left after issue #202, and all the artists since then seemed rather uninspired, until Shooter got back to the book.

As I said, the stories were unremarkable, with one exception. Issue #209, like issue #178, focused on one Avenger, the Beast However, unlike issue #178, issue #209 was just plain awful

Vera, Hank McCoy's old girlfriend re-appears and they fall in love again. We are not shown this, we are just told that it happened, which makes it hard for us to accept it. What makes it harder still is that it just seems out of character for the Beast to act this way! Especially since he and Vera didn't even seem to like each other that much the last time they were together (*Amazing Adventures* #16 and *Hulk* #161). Apparently I am not the only one who feels this way since in *Avengers* #210 and #211, the Beast is his merry, philandering old self again.

Besides this, the story is full of tacky histrionics and improbabilities and mucked-up morality. The writer of this story was J M. De Matteis, who is currently scripting Captain America and the Defenders (which now, unfortunately includes the Beast). The less said about this, the better.

With issue #211 The Avengers regained Jim Shooter as their steady writer and Bob Hall became the artist with issue #212. The artwork has been flat which is surprising, since Bob Hall's work on the *Champions* was intriguing, but the stories have been anything but dull since Shooter took over.

Issue #211 brought the first big membership shakeup in some time to the Avengers Wonder-Man left, which was understandable, since he really never did seem too comfortable as an Avenger. I did like him as a character, and was sorry to see him go, but I hear he may have his own series soon anyway. Since Simon Williams left, it seemed only logical that the Beast go as well, and his reasons seemed perfectly valid. Not so with the Vision and the Scarlet Witch, however They want to try and have a NORMAL life? Pray tell, how is an android with a red face who floats going to mix in with the rest of humanity? More likely they went off to have a mini-series, although they couldn't tell people that.

Having Moondragon manipulating people in and out of the roster is a little too convenient a plot device for my liking. I much preferred when the government did it, but I suppose they can't do that all the time.

So now what we are left with is the original Avengers, just as they were issue one, except that Tigra is substituted for the Hulk. Of course, Iron Man's armor is not gold, but red-and-gold, and Ant-Man is now Yellowjacket, but Cap is still Cap and Thor is still Thor and the Wasp is still the Wasp, no matter what costume she's wearing.

However, Jim Shooter has made a discovery. It apears that Marvel readers prefer a dynamic line-up to a stable cast of characters, no matter what they may say. Sure, lots of people wailed and howled when the Pheonix died, but didn't the sales on X-Men go through the roof? And even though I may not like what is going on in the Avengers, for reasons I will go into below, I still buy every issue, just to see WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT!

So Yellowjacket, formerly Goliath, formerly Giant-Man, formerly Ant-Man, the second invention of Stan Lee in the Marvel Universe, has a nervous breakdown, beats his wife, and betrays the Avengers. Wow. Yellowjacket, I admit, was not the most interesting of characters before this. He never really had that certain something that made him inherently interesting like any of the other charsacters who still have their own book. He always seemed a poorman's Reed Richards, a scientist who made himself small, then big, then small again. Big deal. His wife, the Wasp seemed more interesting with her determined frivolity, and even the new Ant-Man, Scott Lang seems destined for bigger things. (No pun intended.)

So Jim Shooter totaled up Henry Pym's long career and the sum he came up with was failure and madness Since Yellowjacket is dealt with elsewhere in this issue I won't dwell on this any further. I will say that I think the change in Henry Pym's character could have been more effective and believable if we could have seen it developing a little more

The new Avenger is, or was, Tigra the Were-Woman, who, like Ms. Marvel, is a woman character who has seen better days. She originally was Greer Nelson, the Cat, and she had her own magazine in 1972-73. Unfortunately, it only lasted four issues, but in that brief run it knew the artistic talents of Wally Wood, Bill Everett and Jim Starlin. The Claws of the Cat was a feminist comic book, and it had an axe to grind. Then, in one of the worst origin stories I have ever read, Greer Nelson became Tigra the Were-Woman (*Giant-Size Creatures* #1). She had her own book for a short period of time, again (*Marvel Chillers* #3-7). And again, this book was above average (one issue featured art by John Byrne, one of his first jobs at Marvel. (*Chillers* #6).

The Tigra that joined the Avengers was not the Greer Nelson I remember. She seemed like a female Beast, flirtacious and full of wise-cracks. At the same time, she seemed like a female Wonder-Man, desperate to prove herself, and at the same time scared silly of dying.

Wait a minute. Greer Nelson was witty, but no wise-ass She was also a very courageous woman. After all, its not a coward who takes on the Frightful Four single-handed (*Fantastic Four* #177). Of course, a taste of the Ghost-Rider's hellfire is enough to make anybody think twice, but I would give her credit for more spine than that

The problem is that the *Avengers* has become a Super-Hero soap opera. Two objections may be raised to this charge. First, aren't most comics soap operas? And secondly, what's so bad about soap operas, anyway? I'll answer the second question, and in so doing answer the first. Soap operas, by and large, have better, more intricate plots than your average TV sitcom. It is not difficult to get more complicated than a TV sitcom. Any sentence of more than five words is more complicated than a TV sitcom. My objection to soap operas, is that they have no soul. They revel in dirt and degradation and pander to an audience's baser instincts. Now, I seldom watch TV, so people who know soap opera better than I do may claim I'm wrong. But, I'm not talking abut soap operas, I'm talking about the *Avengers*.

The Avengers are heroes, and are supposed to be admired, but of late there has been less and less to admire about the Avengers. The characters of Thor, Iron Man, and Captain America have become increasingly hard to identify with and Yellowjacket and Tigra both seem like quitters. Only the Wasp is showing some life, but she seems awfully unforgiving to the man she was so crazy about such a short time ago. But, after nineteen years, she is the Avengers' first female leader.

It seems like character manipulation just to amuse the masses. Moondragon kills her father, Drax the Destroyer, but it's not tragic, just shocking.

A while back Marvel had a contest. All you had to do was answer the question: How can the Marvel Universe meet the challenge of the Eighties? I didn't enter, and I don't remember what the winning answer was, but I might answer now: "By having its characters inspire us with their deeds and touch us with their thoughts, not just shock us with their actions."

Enough preaching from me. I'm sure that Jim Shooter's writing on the Avengers will, in the end, be up to his usual standard. After all, I have no idea what is really going to happen to Tigra or Yellowjacket. All I can do is wish the Avengers a happy 19th birthday (Issue #223, Sept. 1982) and I look forward to many enjoyable and exciting years in the future

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THE AVENGERS CHECKLIST

by Rocco Nigro

The checklist will list issue number, date, cover price, writer, penciller, inker, letterer, colorist (when listed), page count and title. A brief summary of each issue follows the title. Creative persons with the same last name will be noted by first initials; if the first initials are the same, full names will be used unless the people involved never perform the same creative role.

#1 September 1963, 12¢. Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Dick Ayers, Sam Rosen, 22 pages. "The Coming of the Avengers!" Introduction and origin of the Avengers. Members include Thor, Ant-Man, Wasp, Iron Man, and Hulk. Appearance by Rick Jones and Teen Brigade. Avengers battle Loki.

#2 November 1963, 12¢. Lee, Kirby, Paul Reinman, Art Simek, 22 pages. "The Avengers Battle the Space Phantom!" Hulk leaves the Avengers at end of the story. Ant-Man appears as Giant-Man. Rick Jones and Teen Brigade appear.

#3 January 1964, 12¢. Lee, Kirby, Reinman, S. Rosen, 25 pages. "The Avengers Meet Sub-Mariner! The Avengers battle the Hulk and the Sub-Mariner. Rick Jones and Teen Brigade appear.

#4 March 1964, 12¢. Lee, Kirby, Reinman, A. Simek, 23 pages. "Captain America Joins the Avengers!" Rick, Jones, Teen Brigade, and Sub-Mariner appear. Baron Zemo and Bucky Barnes appear in flashback.

#5 May 1964, 12¢. Lee, Kirby, Reinman, S. Rosen, 23 pages. "The Invasion of the Lava Men!" The Hulk, Rick Jones, Teen Brigade, General Ross and Betty Ross appear.

#6 July 1964, 12¢. Lee, Kirby, Chic Stone, S. Rosen, 23 pages. "Masters of Evil!" The Masters of Evil include Baron Zemo, Black Knight, Radioactive Man and the Melter. Rick Jones and Teen Brigade appear.

#7 August 1964, 12¢. Lee, Kirby, Stone, A. Simek, 22 pages. "Their Darkest Hour!" Avengers battle Zemo, Enchantress, and the Executioner. Rick Jones appears.

#8 September 1964, 12¢. Lee, Kirby, Dick Ayers, S. Rosen, 21 pages. "Kang, the Conqueror!" Rick Jones and Teen Brigade appear.

#9 October 1964, 12¢. Lee, Don Heck, Ayers, A. Simek, 21 pages. "The Coming of Wonder Man!" Wonder Man becomes a member and dies at the end of the story. Avengers battle Wonder Man, Zemo, Enchantress and the Executioner.

#10 November 1964, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Avengers Break Up!" The Avengers fight Zemo, Enchantress, Executioner, Immortus and many heroes from the past. Rick Jones and Teen Brigade appear.

#11 December 1964, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Stone, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Mighty Avengers Meet Spider-Man!" Avengers and Spider-Man battle Kang and Spider-Man robot. Rick Jones appears and Iron Man does not appear in story.

#12 January 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "This Hostage Earth!" Avengers against the Red Ghost and the Mole Man. Rick Jones appears.

#13 February 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Castle of Count Nefaria!" Avengers fight the Maggia. Rick Jones and Teen Brigade appear. The Wasp badly wounded at end of story.

#14 March 1965, 12¢. Lee/Larrk lire/Larry Lieber, Kirby/Heck, Stone, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Even Avengers Can Die!" The Avengers battle the Kallusian (an alien race) to save the life of Dr. Svenson, who is needed to save the Wasp's life from previous issue's wounds.

#15 April 1965, 12¢. Lee, Kirby/Heck, Mickey Demeo, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Now, By My Hand, Shall Die A Villain!" Avengers fight Zemo, Melter, Black Knight, Executioner and the Enchantress. Zemo dies at end of the story. Rick Jones appears.

#16 May 1965, 12¢. Lee, Kirby/Ayers, Ayers, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Old Order Changeth!" First appearance of Jarvis. Rick Jones appears. New line-up: Captain America, Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch and Hawkeye.

#17 June 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Four Against the Minotaur." The Avengers against the Mole Man. Rick Jones and the Hulk appear.

#18 July 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, A. Simek, 20 pages. "When the Commissar Commands" The Avengers battle Major Hoy and a robot.

#19 August 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, A. Simeck, 20 pages. "The Coming of the Swordsman!" Origin of Hawkeye and the Swordsman, Part I.

#20 September 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Wally Wood, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Vengeance is Ours!" Swordsman becomes a member in this issue. The Avengers fight Swordsman and the Mandarin, Part II.

#21 October 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Wood, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Bitter Taste of Defeat" Avengers against Power Man and the Enchantress, Part I.

#22 November 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Wood, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Road Back!" Captain America leaves the Avengers. Avengers battle Enchantress, Power Man, Ringmaster and his Masters of Menace, Part II.

#23 December 1965, 12¢. Lee, Heck, John Romita, Sherigail, 20 pages. "Once an Avenger" Captain America returns. Avengers take on Kang, Part I.

#24 January 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, A. Simek, 20 pages. "From the Ashes of Defeat!" Avengers fight Kang, Part II.

#25 February 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ayers, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Enter Dr. Doom."

#26 March 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Frank Ray, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Voice of the Wasp!" The Wasp fights Attuma. The Avengers go to rescue Wasp and battle Attuma. Part I.

#27 April 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ray, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Four Against the Flood Tide!" Avengers against the Beetle and Attuma. Part II.

#28 May 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Ray, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Among Us Walks A Goliath!" The Avengers fight the Collector and the Beetle. Giant-Man becomes Goliath. Goliath and the Wasp return to the Avengers. Goliath's powers become limited.

#29 June 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Frank Giacoia, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "This Power Unleashed!" Avengers battle Power Man, Black Widow and Swordsman. Goliath's height is restricted to 10 feet. Part I

#30 July 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Giacoia, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Frenzy in a Far-Off Land!" Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch leave. The Avengers against Black Widow, Swordsman and Power Man, Part III. Goliath battles the Keeper of the Flame. Part I.

#31 August 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Giacoia, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Never Bug A Giant!" Avengers battle the Keeper of the Flame. Part II.

#32 September 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Heck, A. Simek 20 pages. "The Sign of the Serpent!" Black Widow appears. Avengers fight the Sons of the Serpent. Part I.

#33 October 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Heck, A. Simek, 20 pages. "To Smash A Serpent!" Black Widow appears. Scarlet Witch on cover but not in story. Part II.

#34 November 1966, 12¢. Lee, Heck, Heck, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Living Laser!" Part I

#35 December 1966, 12¢. Lee/Roy Thomas, Heck, Heck, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Light That Failed!" Goliath regains some of his powers. Avengers battle the Living Laser. Part II.

#36 January 1967, 12¢. Thomas, Heck, Heck, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Ultroids Attack!" Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch return. Black Widow appears. Avengers fight Ixar and Ultroids. Part I.

#37 February 1967, 12¢. Thomas, Heck, Heck, A. Simek, 20 pages. "To Conquer A Colossus!" Black Widow appears. Avengers battle Ixar and Ultroids. Part II.

#38 March 1967, 12¢. Thomas, Heck, George Bell, A. Simek, 20 pages. "In Our Midst, An Immortal!" Avengers against Ares and Enchantress through Hercules.

#39 April 1967, 12¢. Thomas, Heck, Bell, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Torment and the Triumph!" Captain America away on mission. Hercules appears. Avengers battle the Mad Thinker and the Triumvirate.

#40 May 1967, 12¢. Thomas, Heck, Bell, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Suddenly, The Sub-Mariner!" Hercules appears.

#41 June 1967, 12¢. Thomas, John Buscema, Bell, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Let Sleeping Dragons Lie!" Hercules appears. Avengers fight Dragon Man. Part I.

#42 July 1967, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Bell, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Plan and the Power!" Captain America returns. Hercules and Black Widow appear. Avengers battle Dragon Man and Diablo. Part II

#43 August 1967, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Bell, Jerry Feldmann, 20 pages. "Color Him The Red Guardian!" Black Widow and Hercules appear. Red Guardian is Black Widow's husband. Part I.

#44 September 1967, 12¢. Thomas, J, Buscema, Vince Colletta, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Valiant Also Die." Avengers battle Red Guardian, Colonel Ling and General Brushov, who all die at end of story. Some of Black Widow's origin is revealed. Hercules appears. Part II.

#45 October 1967, 12¢. Thomas, Heck, Colletta, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Blitzkrieg in Central Park!" Thor and Iron Man appear. Goliath is able to shrink again, Hercules becomes a member. Avengers Annual #1 takes place after this issue. Avengers against the Super-Adaptoid.

#46 November 1967, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Colleta, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Agony and The Ant-Hill!" Goliath regains his Ant-Man powers Goliath and Wasp fight Whirlwind. Black Widow appears.

#47 December 1967, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, George Tuska, L.P. Gregory, 20 pages, "Magneto Walks the Earth" Captain America leaves the Avengers Origin and intro of New Black Knight. Old Black Knight dies in story Part I.

#48 January 1968, 12¢. Thomas, Tuska, Tuska, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Black Knight Lives Again!" Origin of Black Knight. Villains are Magneto and the Toad. Part II.

#49 February 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, J. Buscema, A. Simek, 20 pages "Mine is the Power!" Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch leaves the Avengers. Goliath loses his expanding powers. Part II of Magneto story. Part I of Hercules' battle with Typhon and Tartars.

#50 March 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, J. Buscema, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "To Tame a Titan!" The Avengers take on Typhon and Erinnye. Hercules leaves at end of story. Part II.

#51 April 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Tuska, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "In the Clutches of the Collector!" Goliath regains his powers and gets a new costume. Thor and Iron Man appear.

#52 May 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Colletta, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Death Calls for the Arch-Heroes!" The Avengers battle the Grim Reaper. Black Panther becomes a member

#53 June 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Tuska, A. Simek, 20 pages. "In Battle Joined!" Avengers fight Magneto and the Toad. The X-Men, Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver appear. Story continues from X-Men #45. Part IV of Magneto storyline.

#54 July 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Tuska, A. Simek, 20 pages. "And Deliver Us From the Masters of Evil!" Avengers take on the Masters of Evil (Klaw, Whirlwind, Melter, Radioactive Man), Ultron-5 and the Crimson Cowl (Jarvis). Black Knight appears. Part I.

#55 August 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, George Klein, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Mayhem Over Manhattan!" Avengers fight Masters of Evil and Ultron-5. Black Knight appears, Part II

#56 September 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Klein, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Death Be Not Proud" Captain America appears. Avengers go back in time to battle Zemo. Story continues in part from Avengers Annual #2

#57 October 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Klein, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Behold, the Vision!" The Vision is an android with the brain pattern of Wonder Man and the body of the Golden Age Human Torch. Avengers battle Ultron-5.

#58 November 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Klein, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Even an Android Can Cry!" Thor, Iron Man and Captain America appear. Part of the Vision's origin is told. Vision becomes a member.

#59 December 1968, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Klein, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Name is Yellowjacket!" Goliath takes up a new identity: Yellowjacket, Part I.

#60 January 1969, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Demeo, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Till Death Do Us Part!" Wedding of Henry Pym and Janet Van Dyne who leave on their honeymoon. Captain America, Fantastic Four, Crystal, Dr Strange, Nick Fury, Daredevil, Angel, Beast, Iceman, Marvel Girl, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Cyclops. The Avengers fight Ringmaster and the Circus of Crime. Black Knight returns. Part II.

#61 February 1969, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Klein, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Some Say the World Will End in Fire, Some Say in Ice!" Story continues from Dr. Strange #178. The Avengers battle Ymir, Surtur, Marduk and the Sons of Satannish.

#62 March 1969, 12¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Klein, A. Simek, 20 pages. "The Monarch and the Man-Ape!"

#63 April 1969, 12¢. Thomas, Gene Colan, Klein, A. Simek, 20 pages "And in this Corner: Goliath!" Black Widow appears. Yellowjacket and the Wasp return. Hawkeye becomes Goliath. The Avengers battle the Thinker, Egghead, and the Puppet Master, Part I

#64 May 1969, 12¢. Thomas, Colan, Klein, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Like a Death Ray From the Sky!" Avengers fight Egghead, Black Widow appears. Hawkeye's brother Barney dies Hawkeye's name is revealed as Clint Barton. Part II.

#65 June 1969, 12¢. Thomas, Colan, Sam Grainger, S. Rosen, 20 pages "Mightier Than the Sword?" Avengers battle Egghead and Swordsman. Hawkeye's origin is retold

#66 July 1969, 15¢. Thomas, Barry Smith, Syd Shores, A. Simek, 20 pages "Betrayal!" Black Panther leaves, Thor and Iron Man return. Avengers fight Ultron-6. Part I.

#67 August 1969, 15¢. Thomas, Smith, Klein, A. Simek, 20 pages. "We Stand at Armageddon!" Avengers battle Ultron-6. Part II

#68 September 1969, 15¢. Thomas, Sal Buscema, Grainger, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "And We Battle For the Earth!" Black Panther returns. Avengers fight Ultron-6. Part III.

#69 October 1969, 15¢. Thomas, Gene Colan, Klein, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Let the Game Begin!" Captain America returns. The Avengers take on Kang, Grandmaster, The Squadron Sinister (Dr. Spectrum Nighthawk, Whizzer, Hyperion), and the Growing Man. Part I.

#70 November 1969, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, Grainger, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "When Strikes the Squadron Sinister." Avengers battle Kang and Grandmaster. Origin of the Squadron Sinister. Black Knight appears. Part II.

#71 December 1969, 15¢. Thomas, S Buscema, Grainger, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Endgame!" Black Knight becomes a member. Golden Age Human Torch, Captain America and Sub-Mariner appear. Avengers fight Kang and Grandmaster. Part III.

#72 January 1970, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, Grainger, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Did You Hear the One About Scorpio?" Captain Marvel, Rick Jones and Nick Fury appear. Black Panther, Thor, Iron Man and Black Knight leave the Avengers. Avengers take on Zodiac (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Libra, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces).

#73 February 1970, 15¢. Thomas, Herb Trimpe/Giacoia, Grainger, A Simek, 20 pages. "The Sting of the Serpent!" Black Panther returns, Captain America leaves. Avengers battle the Sons of the Serpent. Part I.

#74 March 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J Buscema, Tom Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Pursue the Panther!" Avengers fight the Sons of the Serpent. Part II.

#75 April 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Warlord and the Witch!" Yellowjacket and Wasp leave, Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch, Thor, Iron Man, Captain America return. Avengers battle Arkon. Part I.

#76 May 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Blaze of Battle, the Flames of Love!" Avengers battle Arkon. Part II.

#77 June 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Heroes For Hire!" Avengers fight the Split-second Squad Captain America, Thor, Iron Man don't appear. Black Panther assumes Luke Charles (school teacher) identity.

#78 July 1970, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Man-Ape Always Strikes Twice!" Avengers battle the Lethal Legion (Grim Reaper, Man-Ape, Living Laser, Power Man, Swordsman). Captain America returns. Part I.

#79 August 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, A. Simek, 20 pages "Lo, the Lethal Legion!" Thor and Iron Man return. Part III.

#80 September 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Coming of Red-Wolf!" Avengers battle Cornelius Van Lunt and Jason Birch. Part I.

#81 October 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "When Dies a Legend!" Avengers fight Cornelius Van Lunt and Jason Birch. Red Wolf appears. Part II.

#82 November 1970. 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Hostage!" Avengers battle Aries. Daredevil appears.

#83 December 1970, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, Herb Cooper, 20 pages. "Come On In, the Revolution's Fine!" The Avengers battle Valkyrie and the Masters of Evil. Wasp appears for one issue only. Thor, Captain America, Iron Man leave. The Liberators is formed (Valkyrie, Wasp, Medusa, Black Widow, Scarlet Witch).

#84 January 1971, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, Mike Stevens, 20 pages. "The Sword and the Sorceress!" Black Knight and Thor return. Avengers battle Enchantress and Arkon

#85 February 1971, 15¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Giacoia, Stevens, 20 pages. "The World Is Not For Burning." Black Knight leaves. Avengers take on the Squadron Supreme (Lady Lark, Hawkeye, American Eagle, Tom Thumb, Nighthawk, Dr. Spectrum, Whizzer, Hyperion). Part I.

#86 March 1971, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, Jim Mooney, Shel Leferman, 20 pages. "Brain-Child to the Dark Tower Came!" Iron Man returns. Avengers and Squadron Supreme battle Brain-Child. Part II.

#87 April 1971, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, Giacoia, Stevens, 20 pages. "Look Homeward, Avenger." Black Panther origin retold. Avengers fight A.I.M. and B'Tumba.

#88 May 1971, 15¢. Harlan Ellison/Thomas, S. Buscema, Mooney, Leferman, 20 pages. "The Summons of Psyklop!" Falcon, Redwing, Reed Richards, Hulk, Captain America Appear. Thor, Captain America, Iron Man and Goliath leave. Story continues in Hulk #140.

#89 June 1971, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, Grainger, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Only Alien!" Only Vision, Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver appear. Avengers battle Annihilus, Sentry #559, Ronan. Part I of Kree-Skrull War. Captain Marvel and Rick Jones appear.

#90 July 1971, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, S. Buscema, Stevens, 20 pages. "Judgment Day!" Goliath, Wasp, Yellowjacket return. Captain Marvel and Rick Jones appear. Avengers battle Sentry #459 and Ronan. Part II.

#91 August 1971, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, S. Buscema, A. Simek, 20 pages. "Take One Step Backwards!" Yellowjacket and Wasp leave at end of story. Captain Marvel and Rick Jones appear. Avengers fight Ronan, Sentry #459 and Skrulls. Part III.

#92 September 1971, 15¢. Thomas, S. Buscema, George Roussos, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "All Things Must End!" Captain Marvel and Rick Jones appear. Avengers battle Ronan, Super Skrull, Sentry #459. Part IV.

#93 November 1971, 25¢. Thomas, Neal Adams, Palmer, S. Rosen, 34 pages. Chapter I: "This Beachhead Earth," 4 pages. Chapter II: "A Journey to the Center of the Android," 18 pages. Chapter III: "War of the Weirds!" 12 pages. Date on cover is moved up a month. Ant-Man, Captain Marvel, and Rick Jones appear Thor, Captain America and Iron Man return. Avengers battle Skrulls (as J. Warren Craddock, Thing, Human Torch, Mr. Fantastic) and Super Skrull. Ant-Man takes a journey through the insides of the Vision's body. Part V.

#94 December 1971, 20¢. Thomas, Adams/J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 23 pages. Chapter I: "More than Inhuman," 6 pages. Chapter II: "1971: A Space Odyssey," 10 pages. Chapter III: "Behold the Mandroids," 7 pages. Chapter II pencilled by J. Buscema, rest by Adams. Avengers battle Super Skrull, Skrulls and Mandroids. Captain Marvel, Rick Jones and Shield appear. Part VI.

#95 January 1972, 20¢. Thomas, Adams, Palmer, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "Something Inhuman This Way Comes!" Plot crossover with *Amazing Adventures* #5-10. Inhumans, Nick Fury, Mandroids, Rick Jones and Joey appear. Avengers battle Maximus, Skrulls and the Kree. Part VII.

#96 February 1972, 20¢. Thomas, Adams, Palmer/Adams/Alan Weiss, S Rosen, 20 pages. "The Andromeda Swarm." Avengers fight Ronan and the Skrulls. Rick Jones, Captain Marvel and Kree Supreme Intelligence appears. Part VIII

#97 March 1972, 20¢. Thomas, J. Buscema, Palmer, S. Rosen, 21 pages. "Godhood's End!" Neal Adams credited as "consultant." Rick Jones merges with Captain Marvel. Golden age Captain America, Sub-Mariner, Vision, Human Torch, Patriot, Fin, Blazing Skull, Angel appear. Avengers battle Annihilus, Ronan, Skrulls, Part IX

#98 April 1972, 20¢. Thomas, Smith, S. Buscema, S. Rosen, 21 pages. "Let Slip the Dogs of War" Rick Jones appears. Hercules and Hawkeye return. Hawkeye gives up Goliath identity and also gets new costume. Avengers fight Ares. Part I

#99 May 1972, 20¢. Thomas, Smith, Tom Sutton, A. Simek, 21 pages. "They First Make Mad!" Rick Jones appears. Avengers battle Kratos, Bia and Ares Part II

#100 June 1972, 20¢. Thomas, Smith, Smith/Joe Sinnott/Syd Shores, John Costanza, 23 pages. "Whatever Gods There Be!" Black Knight, Hulk, Ant-Man, Wasp, Hercules, Black Panther, Swordsman return for this issue only plus regulars Vision, Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch, Thor, Iron Man, Captain America, Hawkeye. Avengers take on Ares, Enchantress, Kratos and Bia. Part III.

#101 July 1972, 20¢. Ellison/Thomas, Rich Buckler, Dan Adkins, J. Costanza, 21 pages. "Five Dooms to Save Tomorrow!" Avengers save the world from atomic holocaust. Watcher appears.

#102 August 1972, 20¢. Chris Claremont/Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, S. Rosen,20 pages. "What To Do 'Til the Sentinels Come!" Avengers battle the Grim Reaper and the Sentinels. The first clue is given to the Vision/Human Torch origin. Part I.

#103 September 1972, 20¢. Thomas, Buckler, Sinnott, S. Rosen, 20 pages. "The Sentinels Are Alive and Well!" Part II.

#104 October 1972, 20¢. Thomas, Buckler, Sinott, J. Costanza, 20 pages. "With a Bang and a Whimper!" Quicksilver vanishes. Avengers fight the Sentinels. Part III.

#105 November 1972, 20¢. Steve Englehart, J. Buscema, Mooney, J. Costanza, 20 pages. "In the Beginning Was the World Within!" The Avengers battle Gaza, Barbarus, Lupo, Equilibrius, Brain-Child, Amphibius, Lorelei (The Beast-Brood). Captain America leaves and Black Panther returns.

#106 December 1971, 20¢. Englehart, Buckler/Tuska, Dave Cockrum, J. Costanza, 20 pages. "A Traitor Stalks Among Us!" Captain America returns and Thor leaves. Rick Jones appears. Avengers take on the Space Phantom, Grim Reaper and H.Y.D R A. Part I

#107 January 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Jim Starlin/Tuska, Cockrum, Denise Vladimer, Glynis Wein, 20 pages. "The Master Plan of the Space Phantom!" Avengers battle Grim Reaper, H.Y.D.R.A., Rick Jones appears. Part II.

#108 February 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Heck/Cockrum, Sinnott, J. Costanza, Petra Goldberg, 20 pages. "Check and Mate!" Thor returns, Captain Marvel and Rick Jones appear. Avengers fight H.Y.D.R.A., Space Phantom, and the Grim Reaper, Part III.

#109 March 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Heck, Frank McLaughlin, Charlotte Jetter, Stan Goldberg, 20 pages. "The Measure of a Man!" Hawkeye and Captain America leave. Avengers battle Champion.

#110 April 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Heck Giacoia/Esposito, Leferman, G. Wein, 20 pages. "And Now, Magneto!" Quicksilver returns and leaves the Avengers. Captain America returns. The X-Men appear. Story continues in *Daredevil* #99. Quicksilver story crossover to *Fantastic Four* #32. Avengers battle Magneto and the Piper. Part I.

#111 May 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Heck, Esposito, J. Costanza, David Hunt, 20 pages. "With Two Beside Them!" Black Widow becomes a member. Daredevil is offered membership but refuses. X-Men appear. Avengers fight Magneto and the Piper. Part II.

#112 June 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Heck, Frank Bolle, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 20 pages. "The Lion God Lives!" Black Widow leaves. Mantis and Swordsman appear.

#113 July 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Bob Brown, Bolle, J. Costanza, Hunt, 19 pages. "Your Young Men Shall Slay Visions!" Avengers fight the Living Bombs.

#114 August 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Esposito, A. Simek, P. Goldberg, 19 pages. "Night of the Swordsman!" Avengers battle the Lion God. Mantis becomes a member. Swordsman returns.

#115 September 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Esposito, Jean Izzo, S. Goldberg, 19 pages. "Below Us the Battle!" (first story) 16 pages. Chapter I: "Alliance Most Foul!" 3 pages. First part of the Avengers/Defenders war. In the first story, Avengers battle Brogladytes and Skol. In the second story, the villains are Loki and Dormammu. Defenders appear. Story continues in *Defenders* #8. Part I

#116 October 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Esposito, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 19 pages. Chapter 2: "Betrayal!" 10 pages. Chapter 3: "The Silver Surfer vs. The Vision and the Scarlet Witch," 9 pages. Story continues in *Defenders* #9. Villains are Loki and Dormammu. Part III.

#117 November 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Esposito/McLaughlin, June Braverman, P. Goldberg, 18 pages. "Holocaust!" 2 pages. Chapter 7: "Swordsman vs. the Valkyrie," 8 pages. Chapter 8: "Captain America vs. the Sub-Mariner," 8 pages. Sunfire appears. Villains are Loki and Dormammu. Story continues in *Defenders* #10. Part V.

#118 December 1973, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Esposito/Giacoia, Tom Orzechowski, Roussos, 19 pages. Chapter II: "To the Death!" Story continues in *Defenders* #11. Avengers fight Dormammu and Loki. Part VII.

#119 January 1974, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Heck, A. Simek, G. Wein, 20 pages. "Night of the Collector!"

#120 February 1974, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Heck, A. Simek, Roussos, 19 pages. "Deathstars of the Zodiac!" Black Panther and Captain America leave. Part I.

#121 March 1974, 20¢. Englehart, J. Buscema, Heck, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 19 pages. "House Divided Cannot Stand!" Avengers fight Zodiac, Captain America appears. Black Panther returns. Part II.

#122 April 1974, 20¢. Englehart, Brown, Esposito, J. Costanza, Roussos, 19 pages. "Trapped in Outer Space!" Avengers battle Zodiac. Libra reveals to Mantis that he is her father. Part III.

#123 May 1974, 25¢. Englehart, Brown, Heck, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 18 pages. "Vengeance in Viet Nam!" Avengers battle Monsieur Khruul. Libra appears. Part I.

#124 June 1974, 25¢. Englehart, J. Buscema/Cockrum, Cockrum, J. Costanza, Roussos, 18 pages. "Beware the Star-Stalker!" Libra appears.

#125 July 1974, 25¢. Englehart, J. Buscema/Cockrum, Cockrum, Orzechowski, P. Goldberg, 18 pages. "The Power of Babel!" Captain America returns. Story takes part between *Captain Marvel* #32, 33. Avengers battle Thanos. Libra appears.

#126 August 1974, 25¢. Englehart, Brown, Cockrum, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 19 pages. "All the Sounds and Sights of Death!" Captain America and Black Panther leave at end of story. Avengers fight Klaw and Solarr. *Giant-Size Avengers* #1 takes place before Captain America leaves.

#127 September 1974, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema, Joe Straton, Orzechowski, Englehart, 18 pages. "Bride and Doom!" Avengers batle Omega (Ultron-7), Maximus and Alpha primitives. Story continues in *Fantastic Four* #150. Inhumans, Fantastic Four, and Quicksilver appear. Quicksilver and Crystal get married.

#128 October 1974, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema, Staton, Orzechowski, Englehart, 18 pages. "Bewitched, Bothered and Dead!" Agatha Harkness begins teaching Scarlet Witch. Avengers battle Neckrodamus and Kang.

#129 November 1974, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema, Staton, Orzechowski, Bill Mantlo, 18 pages. "Bid Tomorrow Good-Bye!" Avengers battle Kang and continues in *Giant-Size Avengers* #2. Rama-Tut appears. Part I.

#130 December 1974, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema/Staton, Staton, J. Rosen Mantlo, 18 pages. "The Reality Problem!" Scarlet Witch does not go out on missions. Hawkeye returns. Swordsman is buried. Avengers battle the Slasher and the Titanic Three (Crimson Dynamo, Titanium Man, Radioactive Man). Swordsman appears as a ghost until *Giant-Size Avengers* #4.

#131 January 1975, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema/Staton, Staton, Orzechowski, Phil Rachelson, 17 pages. "A Quiet Half-Hour in Saigon!" Avengers fight Kang, the Legion of the Unliving (Frankenstein, Wonder Man, Midnight, Baron Zemo, Flying Dutchman's Ghost and Golden Age Human Torch). Immortus, Pharaoh Rama-Tut and Nomad (Captain America) appear. Part I.

#132 February 1975, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema/Staton, Staton, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 17 pages. "Kang War II!" Avengers battle Kang and the Legion of the Unliving. Immortus and Rama-Tut appear. Iron Man dies in story. Story continues in *Giant-Size Avengers* #3. Part II.

#133 March 1975, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema/Staton, Staton, Orzechowski, Rachelson, 18 pages. "Yesterday and Beyond!" Origin of Mantis and the Vision. Also explains more about the Kree, Skrulls and Golden Age Human Torch. The Avengers go in separate groups, one with the Vision and all the rest with Mantis. Immortus appears. Avengers go through time with the help of the synchro-staff. Part I.

#134 April 1975, 25¢. Englehart, S. Buscema/Staton, Staton, Orzechowski, Rachelson, 18 pages. "The Times That Bind!" Origin of Vision and Mantis. Part II.

#135 May 1975, 25¢. Englehart, Tuska, Frank Chiaramonte, J. Costanza, Roussos, 18 pages. "The Torch is Passed!" Origin of Vision and Mantis. Story continues in *Giant-Size Avengers* #4. Part III.

#136 June 1975, 25¢. Reprints *Amazing Adventures* #12, 18 pages.

#137 July 1975, 25¢. Englehart, Tuska, Colletta, Charlotte, Jetter, Rachelson, 19 pages. "We Do Seek Out New Avengers!" New Avengers line-up: Thor, Iron Man, Yellowjacket, Wasp, Beast, Moondragon. Avengers battle the Toad (as the Stranger). Vision and Scarlet Witch on honeymoon. Hawkeye goes to search for Black Knight. Agatha Harkness leaves. Wasp is wounded. Part I.

#138 August 1975, 25¢. Englehart, Tuska, Colletta, Jetter, Roussos, 18 pages. "Stranger in a Strange Man!" Avengers battle the Toad. Wasp in hospital. Part II.

#139 September 1975, 25¢. Englehart, Tuska, Colletta, Irving Watanabe, Rachelson, 18 pages. "Prescription: Violence!" Avengers fight Whirlwind. Wasp in hospital. Part III.

#140 October 1975, 25¢. Englehart, Tuska, Colletta, Jetter, P. Goldberg, 18 pages. "A Journey to the Center of the Ant!" Scarlet Witch and Vision return. Avengers fight to save the lives of the Wasp and Yellowjacket. Part IV.

#141 November 1975, 25¢. Englehart, George Perez, Colletta, Orzechowski, Janice Cohen, 18 pages. "The Phantom Empire!" Captain America returns. Wasp and Yellowjacket in hospital and leave Avengers. Avengers take on Hugh Lones, Buzz Baxter and the Squadron Sinister. Patsy Walker appears. Part I.

#142 December 1975, 25¢. Englehart, Perez, Colletta, Orzechowski, Cohen, 18 pages. "Go West, Young Gods!" Hawkeye returns. Avengers are split in two groups. One battles Buzz Baxter, The Squadron Sinister, Hugh Jones. The other fights Kang. Rawhide Kid, Two-Gun Kid, Kid Colt, Night Rider, Patsy Walker and Immortus appear. Part II.

#143 January 1976, 25¢. Englehart, Perez, Grainger, Orzechowski, Roussos, 18 pages. "Right Between the Eons!" Night Rider, Kid Colt, Two-Gun Kid, Rawhide Kid, Immortus, Patsy Walker appear. Avengers battle Squadron Sinister and Kang. Last part of Kang story. Kang dies. Part III.

#144 February 1976, 25¢. Englehart, Perez, Esposito, Denise Wohl, P. Goldberg, 17 pages. "Claws!" Hellcat (Patsy Walker) becomes a member. Hawkeye leaves with Two-Gun Kid. Avengers battle Squadron Sinister, Buzz Baxter, Hugh Jones. Part IV. Part V in Avengers #147.

#145 March 1976, 25¢. Scott Edelman/Tony Isabella, Heck, John Tartaglione, Hunt, Don Warfield, 18 pages. "The Taking of the Avengers!" Chapter 1: "Billion-Dollar Death," 4 pages. Chapter 2: "Target: Captain America," 7 pages. Chapter 3: "The Small Hour," 7 pages. This issue and the next are fillers and Hawkeye, Captain America, Yellowjacket, and Wasp appear, while Hellcat and Moondragon do not. Avengers fight the Assassin. Part I.

#146 April 1976, 25¢. Isabella, Keith Pollard, Heck, Tartaglione, Hunt, P. Goldberg, 18 pages. Chapter 1: "The Assassin Never Fails," 3 pages. Chapter 2: "The Better to Kill Them With," 8 pages. Chapter 3: "Nothing But Our Own Death," 7 pages. Falcon appears. Avengers battle Assassin. Part II.

#147 May 1976, 25¢. Englehart, Perez, Colletta, Wohl, P. Goldberg, 17 pages. "Crisis on Other-Earth!" Avengers battle Squadron Sinister, Hugh Jones and Buzz Baxter, Part V, continued from #144.

#148 June 1976, 25¢. Englehart, Perez, Grainger, Orzechowski, Hugh Paley, 17 pages. Chapter 1: "20,000 Leagues Under Justice!" 3 pages. Chapter 2: "Captain Hawk, Tom Thumb, and Amphibion vs. Beast and Hellcat," 5 pages. Chapter 3: "Dr. Spectrum and the Whizzer vs. Captain America and Iron Man," 9 pages. Part VI.

#149 July 1976, 25¢. Englehart, Perez, Grainger, Orzechowski, Paley, 17 pages. "The Gods and the Gang!" Avengers fight Buzz Baxter, Orka, Hugh Jones, Nelson Rockefeller. Part VII.

#150 August 1976, 25¢. Englehart, Perez, Tartaglione/Duffy Wohland, Wohl, Irene Vartanoff, 18 pages. "Avengers Assemble," 6 pages of new material. 12 pages of *Avengers* #16. Yellowjacket and Wasp return. Part I.

#151 September 1976, 30¢. Gerald Conway/Englehart/Jim Shooter, Perez, Tartaglione, Watanbe, Warfield, 17 pages. "At Last: the Decision!" New line-up: Vision, Scarlet Witch, Beast, Iron Man, Captain America, Wasp and Yellowjacket. Part II.

#152 October 1976, 30¢. Englehart, Conway, J. Buscema, Sinnott, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 18 pages. "Nightmare in New Orleans!" Avengers fight Black Talon. Wonder Man returns as a zombie.

#153 November 1976, 30¢. Conway, J. Buscema, Sinnott, J. Costanza, P. Goldberg, 17 pages. "Home is the Hero!" Avengers battle the Living Laser and a hypnotized Whizzer (Bob Frank). Story continues in *Avengers Annual* #6. Wonder Man appears. Part I.

#154 December 1976, 30¢. Conway, Perez, Pablo Marcos, J. Costanza, Warfield, 17 pages. "When Strikes Attuma!" Wonder Man becomes a regular member. Whizzer appears. Scarlet Witch wounded. Story continues in *Super Villain Team-Up* #9. Part I.

#155 January 1977, 30¢. Conway, Perez, Marcos, J. Costanza, G. Wein, 17 pages. "To Stand Alone!" Avengers battle Dr. Doom and Attuma Sub-Mariner and Whizzer appear. Part III.

#156 February 1977, 30¢. Shooter/Conway, S. Buscema, Marcos, J. Rosen, Warfield, 17 pages. "The Private War of Dr. Doom!" Avengers fight Attuma. Whizzer and Sub-Mariner appear. Part IV.

#157 March 1977, 30¢. Conway, Heck, Marcos, Gasper Salindino, Warfield, 17 pages. "A Ghost of Stone!" Avengers battle a stone figure of the Black Knight.

#158 April 1977, 30¢. Shooter, S. Buscema, Marcos, J. Rosen, Warfield, 17 pages. "When Avengers Clash!" Avengers take on Graviton. Vision battles Wonder Man. Part I.

#159 May 1977, 30¢. Shooter, S. Buscema, Marcos, Wohl, Doc. Martin, 17 pages. "Siege by Stealth and Storm!" Thor and Black Panther return. Avengers battle Graviton. Part II.

#160 June 1977, 30¢. Shooter, Perez, Marcos, Wohl, Slifer/Kraft, 17 pages. "The Trail!" Avengers battle Grim Reaper. Captain America, Thor, Wasp, Yellowjacket and Iron Man leave.

#161 July 1977, 30¢. Shooter, Perez, Marcos, Wohl, Shooter, 17 pages. "Beware the Ant-Man!" Captain America, Iron Man, Wasp and Ant-Man return. Avengers fight Ultron and Ant-Man. Part I.

#162 August 1977, 30¢. Shooter, Perez, Marcos, Wohl, Warfield, 17 pages. "The Bride of Ultron!" Thor returns. Captain America, Beast, Scarlet Witch and Vision wounded. Avengers battle Ultron. Intro of Jocasta (Ultron's bride)

#163 September 1977, 30¢. Shooter, Tuska, Marcos, Wohl, Warfield, 17 pages. "The Demi-God Must die!" Champions appear. Only Iron Man and Beast of the`Avengers appear. Avengers battle Typhon.

#164 October 1977, 30¢. Shooter, John Byrne, Marcos, Wohl, Phil Rachelson, 17 pages. "To Fall By Treachery!" Avengers fight Count Nefaria and the Lethal Legion (Power Man, Whirlwind, Laser). Captain America and Scarlet Witch are cured. Vision still injured. Iron Man leaves. Part I.

#165 November 1977, 35¢. Shooter, Byrne, Marcos, Wohl, Phil Rache, 17 pages. "Hammer of Vengeance!" Avengers battle Count Nefaria. Iron Man and Thor return. Part II.

#166 December 1977, 35¢. Shooter, Byrne, Marcos, Wohl, Rache, 17 pages. "Day of the Godslayer!" Avengers battle Count Nefaria. Vision is cured. Part III.

#167 January 1978, 35¢. Shooter, Perez, Marcos, J. Rosen, Rache, 17 pages. "Tomorrow Dies Today!" Nighthawk and the Guardians of the Galaxy appear. Avengers battle Korvac and Porcupine. Starhawk appears in all "Michael" storyline. Part I.

#168 February 1978, 35¢. Shooter, Perez, Marcos, Wohl, Rache, 17 pages, "First Blood!" Wasp and Yellowjacket do not appear. Mr. Gyrich, from the government appears and appears frequently from here on in. Guardians of the Galaxy appear. Villain: Michael. Part II.

#169 March 1978, 35¢. Marv Wolfman, Hunt/S. Buscema, Hunt, J. Costanza, K. Klaczak, 18 pages. "If We Should Fail, the World Dies Tonight!" Captain America, Iron Man and Black Panther are the only Avengers who appear. Avengers fight a person who is a living time-bomb. This issue is a filler and does not continue from last issue.

#170 April 1978, 35¢. Shooter, Perez, Marcos, Wohl, Shooter, 17 pages. "Though Hell Should Bar the Way!" Jocasta appears. Wasp and Yellowjacket return. Avengers battle Ultron, Part I. Part III of "Michael" story.

#171 May 1978, 35¢. Shooter, Perez, Marcos, Wohl, Rachelson, 17 pages. "Where Angels Fear to Tread!" Ms. Marvel appears. Jocasta becomes a regular character in the Avengers. Captain America vanishes and returns in #174. Avengers battle Ultron. Part II.

#172 June 1978, 35¢. Shooter, S. Buscema, Klaus Janson, Wohl, Rachelson, 17 pages. "Holocaust in New York Harbor!" Hawkeye appears. Vision vanishes and returns in #174. Ms. Marvel appears. Avengers battle Tyrak.

#173 July 1978, 35¢. Shooter, David Michelinie, S. Buscema/D. Hands A Kawecki, N. Yomtov, 17 pages. "Threshold of Oblivion!" Hercules, Black Widow, Black Panther and Captain Marvel appear until #181. Avengers battle the Collector. Part IV of "Michael" story.

#174 August 1978, 35¢. Shooter/Mantlo, Dave Wenzel, Marcos, Shelly Leferman, Rachelson, 17 pages. "Captives ofthe Collector!" Quicksilver, Moondragon, Captain America and the Vision return. Part V of "Michael" story

#175 September 1978, 35¢. Shooter/Michelinie, Wenzel, Marcos, Wohl, Rachelson, 18 pages. "The End and Beginning!" Avengers battle Michael. Part VI

#176 October 1978, 35¢. Shooter/Michelinie, Wenzel, Marcos, Rick Parker, Bob Sharen, 17 pages. "Destiny Hunt!" Ms. Marvel appears. Avengers battle Michael. Part VII.

#177 November 1978, 35¢. Shooter, Wenzel, Marcos/R. Villamonte, Wohl, Nel Yomtov, 18 pages. "The Hope and the Slaughter!" Avengers battle Michael. Part VII (final part). Michael dies.

#178 December 1978, 35¢. Steve Gerber, Carmine Infantino, Rudy Nebres, J. Rosen, Yomtov, 17 pages "The Martyr Perplex!" Beast solo story. Beast battles the Manipulator.

#179 January 1979, 35¢. Tom DeFalco, Mooney, Al Gordon, Wohl, Mario Sen, 17 pages. "Slowly Slays the Stinger!" Avengers try to save Bloodhawk. Story doesn't take place after #177. Part I.

#180 February 1979, 35¢. DeFalco, Mooney, Esposito, Wohl, Sharn, 17 pages. "Berserker's Holiday!" Avengers battle the Stinger and a creature. Bloodhawk dies at end of story. Part II.

#181 March 1979, 35¢. Michelinie, Byrne, Gene Day, Elaine H., Mouly, 17 pages. "On the Matter of Heroes!" New line-up: Iron Man, Vision, Captain America, Scarlet Witch, Beast, Wasp and Falcon (who doesn;t appear until #184). Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch injured. Guardians of the Galaxy appear. New line-up and other regulations are caused by the government. Part I.

#182 April 1979, 35¢. Michelinie, Byrne, Janson, D. Albers, Sharen, 17 pages. "Honor Thy Father!" Hawkeye, Quicksilver appear. Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver are cured and leave the Avengers. Avengers battle Mr. Maximoff, Part II

#183 May 1979, 40¢. Michelinie, Byrne, Janson, Jim Novak, Sharen, 17 pages. "The Redoubtable Return of Crusher Creel!" Ms. Marvel becomes a member. Hawkeye appears. Avengers fight the Absorbing Man. Part I.

#184 June 1979, 40¢. Michelinie, Byrne, D. Hands, Albers, Sharen, 17 pages. "Death on the Hudson!" Avengers battle Absorbing Man. Falcon becomes a member. Hawkeye appears. Part II.

#185 July 1979, 40¢. Mark Gruenwald/Steven Grant/Michelinie, Byrne, Dan Green, J. Costanza, Roger Slifer, 17 pages. "The Yesterday Quest!" Iron Man leaves. Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch's origins are told and they battle Modred. Part I.

#186 August 1979, 40¢. Gruenwald/Grant/Michelinie, Byrne, Green, Novak, Slifer, 17 pages. "Nights of Wundagore!" Origin of Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch. Scarlet Witch fights Modred. Quicksilver battles Chthon (Scarlet Witch). Part II.

#187 September 1979, 40¢. Gruenwald/Grant/Michelinie, Byrne, Green, Novak, Roussos, 17 pages. "The Call of the Mountain Thing!" Wonder Man appears until #192. Avengers battle Chthon. Django Maximoff dies. Part III

#188 October 1979, 40¢. Mantlo, Byrne, Frank Springer/Green, Gasper, Sharen, 18 pages. "Elementary, Dear Avengers!" Quicksilver leaves and finds out that he and Crystal are going to have a baby. Avengers take on Vanadium, Radium, Carbon, Phosphorus, Chlorine. *Avengers Annual #9* takes place after this issue.

#189 November 1979, 40¢. Gruenwald/Roger Stern/Grant/Michelinie, Byrne, Green, Novak, Ben Sean, 17 pages. "Wings and Arrows!" Iron Man returns. Hawkeye solo story, where he fights Deathbird.

#190 December 1979, 40¢. Stern/Grant, Byrne, Green, J. Costanza, Sean, 17 pages. "Heart of Stone!" Daredevil appears, Senate investigation on the Avengers takes place. Avengers battle Grey Gargoyle. Part I. Wonder Man leaves.

#191 January 1980, 40¢. Michelinie/Stern, Byrne, Green, J. Costanza, Sharen, 17 pages. "Back To the Stone Age!" Senate investigation ends. Daredevil appears. Avengers battle Grey Gargoyle. Part II.

#192 February 1980, 40¢. Michelinie, A. Jones, Villamonte, Albers, Sean, 17 pages. "Steel City Nightmare!" Wonder Man returns and Scarlet Witch leaves. Avengers battle Inferno. Part I.

#193 March 1980, 40¢. Michelinie/Pittsburgh Comix Club, S. Buscema/Green, Green, J. Rosen, Sharen, 17 pages. "Battleground: Pittsburgh!" Avengers fight Inferno. Part II.

#194 April 1980, 40¢. Michelinie, Perez, Josef Rubinstein, J. Costanza, Sean, 17 pages. "Interlude!" Falcon leaves. Wonder Man made an official member.

#195 May 1980, 40¢. Michelinie, Perez, Green/Jack Abel, J. Costanza, Sean, 17 pages. "Assault on a Mind Cage!" Yellowjacket returns. New Ant-Man appears. Avengers battle Taskmaster and Dr. Pernell Solomon. Part I.

#196 June 1980, 40¢. Michelinie, Perez, Abel, J. Costanza, Carl Gafford, 17 pages. "The Terrible Toll of the Taskmaster!" Jocasta made an official member. Part II.

#197 July 1980, 40¢. Michelinie, Infantino, Jack's (Abel) Little Helpers, J. Costanza, Sharen, 17 pages. "Prelude of the War-Devil!" Scarlet Witch returns. Avengers battle Red Ronin. Part I

#198 August 1980, 40¢. Michelinie, Perez, Green, J. Costanza, Gafford/Sean, 17 pages. "Better Red than Ronin!" Hawkeye returns. Part II.

#199 September 1980, 50¢. Michelinie, Perez, Green, J. Costanza, Sean, 18 pages. "Last Stand on Long Island!" Avengers battle Red Ronin (Part III). Ms. Marvel is about to give birth. Part I.

#200 October 1980, 50¢. Shooter/Perez/Bob Layton/Michelinie, Perez, Green, J. Costanza, Sean, 35 pages. "The Child is Father To?" Ms. Marvel gives birth to Marcus. Thor returns. Ms. Marvel leaves to limbo with Marcus. Part II

#201 November 1980, 50¢. Michelinie/Shooter, Perez, Green, J. Costanza, Sean, 22 pages. First story: "The Evil Reborn," 14 pages. Wasp battles Ultron's robot. Part I. Second story: "Bully!" Michelinie/Stern, Perez, Day, J. Costanza, Sean, 8 pages. Jarvis solo-story. Wonder Man and Beast don't appear until #203.

#202 December 1980, 50¢. Michelinie/Shooter, Prerez, Esposito, J. Costanza, Warfield, 22 pages. "This Evil Undying!" Yellowjacket leaves. Avengers battle Ultron. Part II.

#203 January 1981, 50¢. Michelinie, Infantino, Green, J. Costanza, Sean, 22 pages. "Night of the Crawlers!" Beast and Wonder Man solo-story.

#204 February 1981, 50¢. Shooter/Bob Budiansky/Michelinie, Don Newton, Green, J. Costanza, Sean, 22 pages. "Claws Across the Water!" Hawkeye leaves. Avengers battle Yellow Claw. Part I.

#205 March 1981, 50¢. Budiansky/Michelinie, Alan Kupperberg, Green, J. Costanza, Sean, 23 pages. "Shadow of the Claw!" Avengers battle Yellow Claw. Part II.

#206 April 1981, 50¢. Mantlo, Colan, Green, Novak, Sean, 22 pages. "Fire in the Streets!" Human Torch appears. Avengers fight Pyron.

#207 May 1981, 50¢. Budiansky/Dan Fingeroth, Colan, Green, Novak, Sean, 22 pages. "Beyond a Shadow." Avengers battle the Shadow Lord. Part I.

#208 June 1981, 50¢. Budiansky/Fingeroth, Colan, Green, Chiang, Slifer, 23 pages. "Eve of Destruction!" Avengers fight the Berserker. Shadow Lord dies. Part II.

#209 July 1981, 50¢. J.M. DeMatteis, Kupperberg, Green, Chiang, Sean, 22 pages. "The Resurrection Stone." The Avengers fight to save the lift of Vera, the Beast's girlfriend. Avengers battle a Skrull.

#210 August 1981, 50¢. Mantlo, Colan, Green, J. Simek, Sean, 22 pages. "The Wrath of the Weatherman!" Thor returns.

#211 September 1981, 50¢. Shooter, Colan, Green, Chiang, Sharen, 22 pages. "By Force of Mind!" New line-up: Captain America, Thor, Wasp, Iron Man, Yellowjacket, Tigra. Angel, Vision, Scarlet Witch, Beast, Wonder Man, Jocasta, Hercules, Hawkeye, Black Widow, Yellowjacket, Dazzler, Ice-Man, Black Panther, Moon Knight, Moon Dragon appear.

#212 October 1981, 50¢. Shooter, Kuperberg, Green, Chiang, Sean, 21 pages. "Men of Deadly Pride!" Gorn, a warrior, is killed which causes the Elfqueen to fight the Avengers. Arguing between Wasp and Yellowjacket.

#213 November 1981, 50¢. Shooter, Bob Hall, Green, Chiang, Warfield, 21 pages. "Court-Martial!" Court-martial of Yellowjacket. Yellowjacket sends robot to fight Avengers so he can arrive to defeat it and prove his worth to the team. Yellowjacket hits Wasp. Part I.

#214 December 1981, 50¢. Shooter, Hall, Green, Chiang, Sharen, 21 pages. "Three Angels Fallen!" Angel appears. Avengers battle Ghost Rider. Don Perlin credited as "consultant." Wasp and Yellowjacket split up. Part II.

#215 January 1982, 60¢. Shooter, Weiss, Green, J. Rosen, Christie Scheele, 21 pages. "All the Ways of Power!" Silver Surfer appears. Avengers battle Molecule Man. Wasp doesn't appear. Part I.

#216 February 1982, 60¢. Shooter, Weiss, Green, J. Rosen, Scheele, 21 pages. "To Avenge the Avengers!" Silver Surfer appears. Avengers battle Molecule Man. Tigra leaves. Fantastic Four appear. Identities of Iron Man and Thor are revealed to other members. Wasp doesn't appear. Part II.

#217 March 1982, 60¢. Shooter, Hall, Green, J. Rosen, Scheele, 22 pages. "Double-Cross!" Avengers battle the Mechano Marander, Egghead and Yellowjacket. Yellowjacket is tricked into helping Egghead and his niece and is jailed at the end of the story. Wasp becomes the leader of the Avengers.

#218 April 1982, 60¢. Shooter and J M. DeMatteis, Perlin/Embellishers Assembled, Embellisher Assembled, J. Rosen, Scheele, 22 pages. "Born Again (And Again And Again. . .)" Avengers fight a creature who's always reborn and becomes a fire creature.

#219 May 1982, 60¢. Shooter, Hall, Embellishers Assembled, J. Rosen, Scheele, 21 pages. "By Divine Right!" Avengers prevent Moon Dragon from controlling a planet. Drax, the Destroyer appears. Part I.

#220 June 1982, 60¢. Shooter, Hall, Green, J. Rosen/Chiang, Scheele, 22 pages. "War Against the Gods!" Avengers battle Moon Dragon. Drax the Destroyer is killed by Moon Dragon (his daughter). Moon Dragon is sent to Asgard. Thor's identity is revealed to the Wasp. Moon Dragon uses Thor as her pawn to battle the Avengers.

Annuals

#1 September 1967, 25¢. Thomas, Heck, Bell, A. Simek, 49 pages. Chapter 1: "The Monstrous Master Plan of the Mandarin," 11 pages. Chapter 2: "To Perish By the Sword," 10 pages. Chapter 3: "Struggle in a Strangeland," 8 pages. Chapter 4: "And A Monster Shall Stalk The Land," 10 pages. Chapter 5: "Showdown In Space," 10 pages. Story continues between *Avengers* #44 and #45. Avengers battle Mandarin, Power Man, Living Laser, Swordsman, Enchantress, Executioner, Ultimo. Avengers include: Thor, Iron Man, Hercules, Hawkeye, Goliath, Wasp, Captain America, Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch

#2 September 1968, 25¢. Thomas, Heck/Werner, Ruth, Colletta, J. Rosen, 44 pages. Chapter 1: "And Time, the Rushing River," 24 pages. Chapter 2: "The Avengers Must Die," 20 pages. Story takes place between *Avengers* #56 and #57. Avengers include: Captain America, Wasp, Goliath, Hawkeye, Black Panther. Avengers battle the Scarlet Centurion and the Old Avengers (Thor, Hulk, Wasp, Iron Man, Giant-Man).

#3 September 1969, 25¢. Reprints *Avengers* #4, *Tales of Suspense* #66-68.

#4 January 1971, 25¢. Reprints *Avengers* #5-6.

#5 January 1972, 25¢. Reprints *Avengers* #8, #11

#6 1976, 50¢. Conway, Perez, Esposito/Vonland/Tartaglione, J. Rosen, P. Goldberg, 35 pages. Chapter 1: "No Final Victory," 8 pages. Chapter 2: "Interlude," 4 pages. Chapter 3: "Confrontation," 5 pages. Chapter 4: "Climax," 10 pages. Story continues between *Avengers* #153 and #154. Avengers include: Captain America, Beast, Yellowjacket, Wasp, Vision, Scarlet Witch, Iron Man. Whizzer and Wonder Man appear. Avengers battle Laser and Nuklo. Second Story: "Night Vision!" Scott Edelman, Herb Trimpe, Vartanoff, Watanbe, 8 pages. Vision solo story. Visions battles Whirlwind

#7 1977, 60¢. Jim Starlin, Starlin, Rubinstein, Orzechowski, P. Goldberg, 34 pages. "The Final Threat." Story continues in *Marvel Two-In-One Annual* #2. Avengers include: Beast, Captain America, Iron Man, Moondragon. Scarlet Witch, Thor, Vision, Warlock and Captain Marvel appear. Warlock dies. Avengers battle Thanos. Story takes place between *Avenger* #166 and #167. Part I.

#8 1978, 60¢. Roger Slifer, Perez, Marcos/Villamonte, J. Rosen/E. Heinl, Gafford, 34 pages. Chapter 1: "Spectrums of Deceit," 17 pages. Chapter 2: "To Tame a Tortured Titan," 5 pages. Chapter 3: "The Speedster Sinister," 3 pages. Chapter 4: "Where There's A Will. . .," 9 pages. Doctor Strange, Thundra, and Ms. Marvel appear. Avengers include: Yellowjacket, Wasp, Quicksilver, Wonder Man, Iron Man, Beast, Captain America, Black Panther, Scarlet Witch, Hawkeye, Vision, Thor. Avengers battle Dr. Spectrum, Thundra, Hyperion, Whizzer and Dr. Spectrum. Story takes place between *Avengers* #178 and #179.

#9 1979, 60¢. Mantlo, Newton, Abel/Rubinstein, J. Costanza, Gafford, 34 pages. Chapter 1: "Today the Avengers Die," 17 pages. Chapter 2: "Something Deadly Lurks Below," 17 pages. Avengers include: Vision, Thor, Iron Man, Captain America, Scarlet Witch, Wonder Man, Hawkeye, Beast, Yellowjacket. Avengers battle Arsenal (Tony Stark's father's robot), built to fight the Nazi. Story takes place between *Avengers* #188 and #189.

#10 1981, 75¢. Claremont, Michael Golden, Armando Gil, J. Rosen, Golden, 38 pages. "By Friends, Betrayed!" Chapter 1, 6 pages. Chapter 2, 8 pages. Chapter 3, 2 pages. Chapter 4, 16 pages. Chapter 5, 6 pages. Spider-Woman, X-Men, and Ms. Marvel appear. Avengers battle the New Brotherhood of Evil Mutants (Mystique, Blob, Avalanche, Destiny, Pyro, Raven). Avengers include: Hawkeye, Scarlet Witch, Wonder Man, Beast, Vision, Iron Man, Jocasta, Captain America, Thor. Ms. Marvel escapes Limbo.

Giant-Size

#1 August 1974, 50¢. Thomas, Buckler, Dan Adkins, A. Simek, P. Goldberg, 50 pages. Chapter 1: "Nuklo, the Invader That Time Forgot," 16 pages. Chapter 2: "The Child is Father to the Fiend," 12 pages. Chapter 3: "What Hell Hath Joined Together," 6 pages. Origin of Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch Golden Age Whizzer is reintroduced. Story takes part in #126 before Captain America leaves. Avengers battle Nuklo. Avengers include: Captain America, Thor, Iron Man, Mantis, Scarlet Witch, Vision. Reprints *Human Torch Comics* #33, 10 pages. Reprints *Tales to Astonish* #58, 7 pages.

#2 November 1974, 50¢. Englehart, Cockrum, Cockrum, Orzechowski, Mantlo, 29 pages. "A Blast From the Past!" Hawkeye returns. Swordsman dies at end of story. Story takes place between *Avengers* #129 and #130. Origin of Kang. Agatha Harkness and Pharaoh Rama-Tut appears. Avengers include: Swordsman, Hawkeye, Iron Man, Scarlet Witch, Thor, Vision, Mantis. Reprints *Fantastic Four* #19.

#3 February 1974, 50¢. Englehart/Thomas, Cockrum, Giella, L.G. Peter, P. Goldberg, 50 pages. "What Time Hath Put Asunder!" 30 pages. Iron Man is brought back to life. Story takes place in between *Avengers* #132 and #133. Avengers battle Kang, Legion of the Unliving, Immortus, Rama-Tut appear. Avengers include: Iron Man, Thor, Vision, Mantis, Hawkeye. Reprints *Avengers* #2, 20 pages.

#4 June 1975, 50¢. Englehart, Heck Tartaglione, Jetter, P. Goldberg, 48 pages. "Let All Men Bring Together!" 30 pages. Story takes place between *Avengers* #135 and #137. Vision and Scarlet Witch marry. Mantis and "ghost" Swordsman get married. Origin of Mantis and Moondragon. Avengers battle Kang, Dormammu, and Umar. Agatha Harkness, Space Phantom, and Titanic Three appear. Avengers include: Vision, Scarlet Witch, Mantis, Iron Man, Hawkeye, Thor. Reprints *Tales to Astonish* #38, 9 pages. Reprints *Amazing Adventures* #1,9 pages.

#5 1975, 50¢. Reprints *Avengers Annual* #1.

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Notes on creative personnel: L.P. Gregory and Gasper Salandino (listed as Gasper in the checklist) are one and the same. The same for Phil Rachelson and Phil Rache George Bell and George Roussos. Frank Ray and Frank Giacoia. Mickey Demeo and Mike Esposito.

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CHRONIC COMMENTS

Dear Chroniclers,

The *F.F. Chronicles* was obviously a labor of love. Cover to cover it gave me my money's worth.

Now, let me say that I enjoyed the Wein and Wolfman interview. However, I disagree with their evaluation of Byrne's tenure as writer. John has, in a relatively short span of time, brought back a tremendous amount of interest to a book that, despite many sincere efforts of other writers, was beginning to show signs of atrophy. John has not ripped off Stan Lee, nor has he forsaked their last ten or so years. What he has done is to "turn back the clock" only in the sense that what the F.F. are doing now seems of actual import to you and me. Too many years were wasted on "epics" that had no meaning to the reader. Now, with such stories as "The Man with the Power," and "Wendy's Friends," we see the book back on the path it was intended to walk.

While we are given occasional "cosmic" stories, we are also given fine character studies of Ben and Johnny which cover much new ground, and actually advance character growth. And rest assured (as I do) that the best is yet to come!

Oh, by the way—looooooved that Byrne centerspread!

Best,
John A. Wilcox
Westport, CT.

Dear Mitch,

I picked up a copy of *The Daredevil Chronicles* yesterday.

Today, I ripped it up and threw it in the trash can.

It seems to me that a magazine entitled *The Daredevil Chronicles* would be a chronicle of the comic's history. But no. What FantaCo offers is *The Frank Miller Chronicles.*

Sorry, ol' buddy, but I am MORE than a little disgusted that a magazine entitled *The Daredevil Chronicles* devotes a mere 3½ paragraphs (paragraphs!!!) out of 32 pages to the man who drew ONE THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHT pages of the series in 85 separate issues.

I think you, Tom, and everyone concerned with the magazine owe Gene Colan an apology to end all apologies. Unless I'm mistaken, Gene's tenure on Daredevil is surpassed in length only by Jack Kirby's on the F.F. during the entire course of Marvel history. And you ignore him. In 36 pages (including covers), you have two pages of art by Fred Hembeck, two by Michael T. Gilbert, one each by Spain, Trina/Leia, and Staton. . .all of whom have about as much to do with Daredevil as Garry Trudeau has to do with Spider-Man. But, in those same 36 pages you couldn't find one lousy panel from Colan's 1,668 pages of art to reprint in your magazine.

I don't like it. And if Gene sees the mag, he ain't going to be too pleased either. But maybe you don't care. After all, Miller will sell your magazine, and to hell with comics history, factual information and a preservation of the feature's continuity.

Your disappointed friend,
Dean Mullaney
Staten Island, NY

Actually, Dean, the book is 48 PAGES plus COVERS! Readers unfamiliar with Dean's moniker should know that he and his brother Jan (get it—Jan and Dean?) have published a fine selection of graphic novels as well as Eclipse Magazine, *and the excellent* Destroyer Duck. *Dean had no way of knowing when he wrote this letter that I asked Gene Colan to do the back cover of* The Daredevil Chronicles. *He said he wanted to ask D.C.'s permission, and that I should call back in a week and he'd know one way or the other. When I called a week later, I got a taped message stating that the number had been discontinued—no new number was provided. I waited two weeks to hear from Gene and when I didn't I called Frank Miller and asked if he and Klaus would do a wraparound instead of only a front cover. I never did hear from Colan. As for stats of Gene's work, they were requested from Marvel and never received. As for the 3½ paragraphs, well, I commissioned an article covering Romita's and Colan's work on the book, and that's what I got.*

Anyway, best of luck to you, Dean, on your impending marriage, from everyone here at the "Co." Now take off, eh?

FantaCo Chronicles Series:

Am enjoying the "Chronicle Series" very much.

Like the *Fantastic Four* and *Daredevil* much better than the *X-Men Chronicles.* Like both cover formats of *Fantastic Four* and *Daredevil.* Has the appearance of a comic book style of Marvel Comics. Hope your company may consider the D.C. Comics line. Good luck!

Mad Mona
San Antonio, TX

Errata

The Fantastic Four Chronicles—thanks should also have been extended to Len Wein and Marv Wolfman for their participation in the Fantastic Four Chronicles. Also, F.F. Checklist errata according to George Perez: #170 pencilled by Perez, not Buckler. Covers: #165 pencilled by Ron Wilson, not Perez; #170 pencilled by Ed Hannigan, not Perez; #195 & #196 inked by Pablo Marcos; #233, #234,#235, & #239 inked by Austin. The Daredevil Chronicles—page 29, Batman is copyright 1982 D.C. Comics

Dear People,

I just bought the *Fantastic Four Chronicles* and I had to write in to say that I enjoyed it.

I'm a 26-year-old substitute teacher, a comics fan and an avid follower of the F.F. As such, I have a few additions to the otherwise complete checklist of F.F. memorabilia. They are:

Reprints

The Fantastic Four Collector's Album. Pubished in 1966 by Lancer Books. Cover from F.F. #29. Reprinting F.F. #6, 11, 31 and Kirby pin-ups from F.F. Annuals #2 & 3. 176 pages. 50¢ cover price. Paperback book format.

The Fantastic Four Return. Published in 1967 by Lancer Books. Cover is from the splash page of F.F. #44. Reprinting F.F. Annuals #2 (including pin-up of Sub-mariner) and F.F. #33 & 35. 160 pages. 50¢ cover price. Paperback book format.

Fantastic Four Appearances in Other Titles

The Fantastic Four in the House of Horrors. A Whitman Big-Little Book published in 1968. Written by William Johnson. Original script and art although most of the art are direct "swipes" from Kirby-Sinnott, circa F.F. #60-70. 254 pages. 39¢ cover price.

As a long-time fan, I thought the introductory piece, "Twenty Years with the World's Greatest Super-Team" was a little long-winded. The most interesting parts were the refusal of Kirby to discuss his association with Marvel and the snippets from Wein and Wolfman's conversation about the writing after Lee and Kirby left the book.

I would have liked to see an in-depth analysis of Thomas, Wolfman and Wein's handling of the book. I remember a Roy Thomas interview in a fanzine that said he despised the warm, friendly, sentimental relationships that developed between issues #60-100 that I found so amazing. Nothing like it has ever been achieved in a mere comic. If the fights were less than spectacular, well, it gave birth to, what I think was, the best Marvel Comics ever done, namely issues #84-87, in a classic confrontation with Dr. Doom that has never been rivalled, just repeated by Wolfman in F.F. #196-200 and Byrne in #236.

Let me say that I'm going to run right out and buy *The Daredevil Chronicles,* I enjoyed the F.F. one so much.

Dan Petitpas
Hyde Park, MA

Dear Mitch,

The Daredevil Chronicles looked real good, but two questions:

1. Why didn't you commission someone to do that Daredevil drawing, the Man Without Fear, but with antlers (Deerdevil)?

2. Why didn't you do that "Hill St. Daredevils" piece? You know what a freak Miller is on "Hill St. Blues!"

Again, congrats on a real good job.

Sincerely,
Roger Green
Albany, NY

To answer both questions, I don't know. I guess the book got away from me. All I could think of was, "What if Deerdevil went Beerhunting?"

So, like, send all letters regarding this or any issue to "Chronic Comments," FantaCo Enterprises, Inc., 21 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12210.

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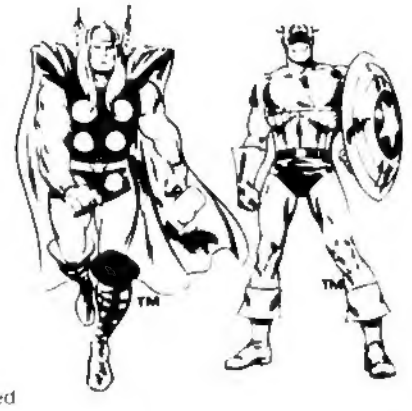

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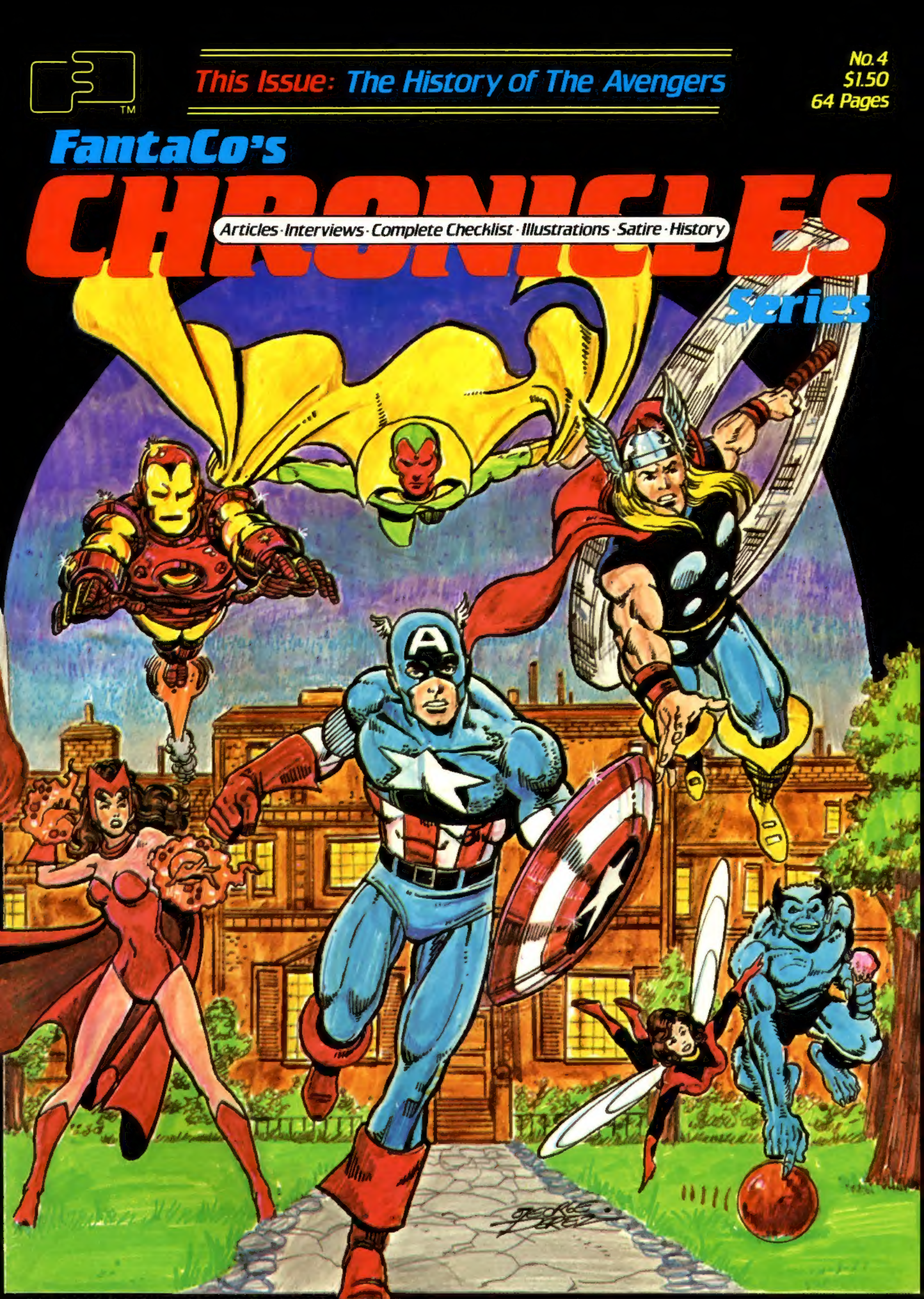

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